Gethen

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/16561658.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Charlie Countryman (2013), The Jane Austen Book Club (2007), Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Extended Universe - Fandom, American Gods (TV)
Relationships:	Grigg Harris/Nigel (Charlie Countryman), Kat Harris/Reba McClane, The Jinn | Ifrit/Salim (American Gods)
Characters:	Grigg Harris, Nigel (Charlie Countryman)
Additional Tags:	Hannibal Extended Universe, Hook-Up, Casual Sex, Gender Identity, genderqueer Grigg, Idiots in Love, Kissing, past Grigg/Jocelyn, Derogatory Language, Strip Tease, consensual feminisation, Anal Fingering, Anal Sex, Nipple Play, Coming Untouched, Relationship Negotiation, Friends With Benefits, Making out at work, Totally not dating, Revelations, mentions of past Nigel/Gabi, Reconciliation, First Time Topping, Public Display of Affection, androgynous clothing choices, Family Reunions, Fake/Pretend Relationship, Sharing a Bed, Anxiety, Guilt, Awkwardness, Aaaaaaangst, Dysphoria, Break Up, Interfering Friends, Starting Over, Conventions, Cosplay, Uniform Kink, Changing Room Sex, Semi-Public Sex, Unsafe Sex, Clothed Sex, Sexual Fantasy, Police Roleplay, Sick Character, Hospitalization, Recovery, Work Issues, Homophobia, Queerphobia, Career Change, captain/crew role play, scifi role play, Exes, Fluid Sexuality, Understanding, Misunderstandings, Manipulation, Love Confessions, Come Marking, Lingerie, Happy Ending, Podfic Welcome, do not copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 80 of Tiger's Mads x Hugh Rare Pair fics, Part 23 of Non Cis Fics
Stats:	Published: 2018-11-08 Completed: 2019-11-07 Words: 65,623 Chapters: 20/20

Gethen

by TigerPrawn

Summary

When Jocelyn leaves Grigg he's heartbroken, at least until gruff and gorgeous Romanian Nigel walks into his life. Perhaps Nigel will be more accepting of his secret than Jocelyn was…

My other home is Twitter

Notes

There are more in depth tags with relevant chapters, but please note - there will be feminising language in a sexual context. This is not done in a demeaning way, and is something Grigg enjoys. If it is something that is an issue for you, this might not be the fic for you.

Chapter 1

Jocelyn had enjoyed The Left Hand of Darkness, and so Grigg had just sort of presumed she'd understand once he explained it all to her. And whilst she wasn't outright cruel about it, it clearly changed things between them. Which sort of surprised him a little. Not least because he felt she always had a little masculine energy about her. Perhaps an unfair way to look at it, and more projection on his part? He had just been caught off guard by how much it was a problem for her.

She hadn't really understood and it was a few short and awkward weeks before she inevitably said *we need to talk.*

Everyone at the book club was great, though neither of them explained the reason behind their breakup - only saying that it had been amicable.

Which it had been in the sense that they didn't fall out, but it was hard for Grigg to pretend he wasn't hurt.

This whole move to Sacramento was meant to have been a fresh start for him, a chance to be himself, and it hadn't been in the end. He had met Jocelyn almost immediately and then the book club happened. And before he knew it he had a whole social group that he'd have to explain everything to, or at least he felt he'd have to. His sisters told him he didn't owe anyone an explanation and he knew they were right, but it really wasn't that simple in practice. Especially with the relationship and now the breakup.

It was a lot for people to understand, rightly or wrongly. It had been months now, but things with the entire book club seemed to be getting more awkward as time passed. Projection again perhaps? Paranoia?

Grigg let out a heavy sigh and moved back from his desk, leaning back in his chair.

He realised it moved back further than expected, at the same time it made a crunching sound. Something was definitely broken, and that something had him crash painfully to the floor, whilst still essentially seated.

"Fuck," The word came out with a tired resignation and he remained laying on his back, legs propped by the remains of the seat, as he looked at the ceiling contemplating that his week could surely only get better from here.

He was still laying on the floor when his assistant, Zeller, popped his head in to see if he wanted coffee.

"Uh, Grigg, are you okay?" He could hear the uncertain concern in Zeller's voice. They'd been working together a few months, since Grigg realised he needed someone to support him beyond the engineering team now that the business was taking off. They got on but weren't social. He was pretty sure Zeller thought he was a little weird, not that he much cared these days.

"I'm fine," Grigg let out a long sigh, making no attempt to move. Definitely resigned to it.

"Do you want me to get Nigel? Or, like… a first aider? Are you hurt?"

"I'm fine," Grigg repeated with no more enthusiasm, whilst discounting the minor bruise to his rather small ego.

"I'll get Nigel," Zeller decided. Grigg turned to look at him, dragging his eyes from the small stain in the ceiling panel that he was sure must have been an exploded soda bottle.

"Who's Nigel?"

*

Nigel wasn't bored as much as he was disinterested. It was an easy life, just lacking in the sort of excitement he'd been used to. And really, that wasn't a bad thing.

When he started over, taking a payout from what Darko owed him for his stake in the club, he had given serious thought to his skill set. Aside from drug dealing and violence, he was low on transferable skills. The only thing he had going for him beyond that was the decade he'd spent from around the age of 13, working with his old man in trade. His dad had run his own small business as a handyman, which he knew he'd wanted Nigel to take over when he was older. But by the time his dad passed when Nigel was 25 years old, he'd already met Darko and started down a different career path.

He never thought he'd one day be doing the same as his dad after all. And whilst working as the maintenance man for the multi occupant office building was far from taxing, it was also extremely far from exciting.

Nigel had just lit a cigarette when a head appeared around the door of his small basement office.

"Nigel, um… are you free?"

"For you darling, always!" Nigel liked Zeller, he had that sort of geeky look that Nigel secretly enjoyed, and a great ass that he was always happy to watch walking away.

At least that was one benefit of the US over Romania and working with Darko - he didn't need to hide his preferences or appetites, and boy did Zeller whet the appetite.

"My boss broke his chair," Zeller started, sounding a little uncertain as he lead the way back to the cluster Zeller's boss rented - a small office and two tech rooms where the engineers remote IT supported various clients. It wasn't that Nigel made a point of knowing all the businesses within the building, just that sometimes it was so quiet that he had nothing better to do.

Nigel hadn't had much cause to go there since the guy moved in, only fitting the specific lighting they needed for their tech rooms before they arrived.

Craig or Greg or something, but Nigel hadn't actually met him at all in the last year or so. It was a busy building and the wiring in the southside always had the bulbs and fuses blowing.

Strangely, all these thoughts were bumbling through Nigel's mind the second he set eyes on -

"Grigg, Nigel's come to help."

Grigg was on the floor. Still sat in a chair that was flat on it's back, leaving him staring at the ceiling.

"Shit, are you hurt? Should we get an ambulance or something?" Nigel asked. He thought Zeller was meant to be pretty smart, surely he should have called more than just the handyman?

"I'm fine," Grigg's voice was soft and forlorn. It made Nigel's heart ache a little - he hated to see someone so beautiful seem so sad.

“You’re flat on your back, darling,” Nigel’s words were a low purr, an attempt to be friendly. Very fucking friendly given the gorgeous way in which the man’s tongue came out to wet his lips whilst he was thinking.

“I think I’ll just stay here a while,” Grigg’s words came out resigned and Zeller seemed uncomfortable. The whole situation looked a fucking mess.

“What was their name gorgeous?” Nigel asked softly, wanting to know that the asshole who caused this despondency was out of the picture, and Grigg was hopefully in need of a shoulder to cry on, or a rebound fuck.

Grigg turned his head, looking rather comical still essentially seated but now turned to frown at him.

“Who?” The way Grigg’s brow knit together was so fucking adorable, Nigel wanted to smooth it out with his thumb.

“Whoever broke your heart. Believe me… I know the look,” Nigel gave a gentle smile, moving to lean against the door jam.

Grigg let out a soft sigh, then - “Jocelyn.”

So, not a fella, but Nigel was happy to live in hope that Grigg was bisexual, or at the least bi-curious.

“She did a number on you, huh?” Nigel folded his arms and settled against the jam, happy to stand and draw Grigg out of his melancholic episode. Happy to just stand there and look at his gorgeous face, if he was honest.

Dealing drugs had oddly made him a good talker and listener - sort of like being a barman but with everyone really fucking high. He’d also had more than enough fucking experience of talking junkies out of stupid fucking situations.

Grigg sighed again, looking back to the ceiling and speaking as though he had a little lump in his throat, “I thought she would understand but instead it just weirded her out and then I had no one to even talk to as all my friends… our friends, they were her friends first.”

“Understand what, darling?” Nigel pressed gently, dropping slowly so that he was now on his haunches - a better height for Grigg to look at him.

Grigg’s mouth turned down at the corners, such was his sadness. It took everything in Nigel not to close the metre distance between them and stroke a comforting hand down the man’s cheek.

He seemed to be getting soft in this new life. Or maybe he just wanted the excuse to make physical contact, he wasn’t sure.

“It doesn’t matter,” Grigg grumbled, frowning at the ceiling.

Nigel gave a slow nod, “Sure. I mean, I’m a total stranger, but I get off work in a half hour and if you felt like you needed to talk with someone… It kind of sounds like you need to, and that you don’t have really anyone else around right now.” Met with silence, Nigel coaxed, “You don’t even need to talk.” He stood and slowly walked the distance between them before lowering back to his haunches next to Grigg.

“Believe me, I’ve got a mother fucker of a breakup story I can share with you. Might even make you feel better,” Nigel grinned.

Now so close, it was difficult for Grigg to ignore him, so he turned his head the slight amount that it took to face Nigel.

When their eyes met, Grigg’s frown eased and a half smile tried to set up home on his lips.

“Let’s get you up, okay? Before you really do put your back out and before poor Zeller has some sort of anxiety attack,” Nigel smiled warmly, completely sucked in by the ever growing if gentle smile on Grigg’s face.

Grigg held out his arm for help.

*

Grigg had no idea what the hell he was doing in the bar two blocks from his office.

Nigel had suggested they meet there once they finished work and he’d agreed. He’d had to work for another hour on finishing off a few things for a client, during which time Nigel checked out his chair and declared it unfit. He’d gone off and returned with duct tape, strapping the whole thing back together to get Grigg through the day but telling him he needed to order a new chair.

Grigg had focused back on his work, but been polite all the same.

He’d *had* to focus on his work. For one thing he’d had things to do and lost god knows how long laying in the ruins of his chair. But also he welcomed the focus so as not to allow himself to be distracted by Nigel.

Who was definitely a distraction.

It had been a while since Grigg had been with a guy, in fact in some ways he always felt he leaned more towards guys - just lacked the confidence for it. And then he’d met Jocelyn and had been immediately drawn to her. But throughout the rest of the afternoon and the short cycle ride over to the bar he couldn’t help but think about Nigel.

That smile, the crooning words in that - quite frankly - sensual accent. The way Nigel had gently helped him up like he was incredibly precious. At that point it didn’t seem like there was any saying no to an afterwork drink - as thanks if nothing else.

Zeller had looked on the whole time, perplexed and concerned. Mostly about the chair. He was a strange guy sometimes.

And now Grigg was at the bar, wondering what to do with himself and wondering if his bike would be okay where it was, chained to the rails at the side of the building.

Nigel said he would have already finished work, so Grigg was hoping he hadn't come and gone whilst waiting for Grigg to arrive. Grigg would hate to seem rude like that but… also… Damn he was gorgeous and between his chair collapsing and arriving at the bar Grigg had pretty much decided that a rebound hookup might be exactly what he needed.

"Fuck. Gorgeous… that doesn't leave a lot to the imagination," Nigel's grin was feral as he approached out of nowhere once Grigg entered the bar. He must have been waiting and spotted Grigg come in. Which… on reflection he was maybe hard to miss in his spandex cycling suit.

"Oh, um… force of habit, it's a fair cycle home. Maybe I should have worn my clothes from the office? I have them in my bag I can-"

"Not on my account," Nigel interrupted, making a very clear point of looking him up and down.

They stood for a moment. The silence wasn't awkward, in fact it was incredibly charged.

Okay, so there really was no denying why both of them were at the bar. Unless he was reading things wrong, which apparently he did sometimes…

"So," Grigg started, "you wanted to talk?"

"I can darling, or you can. I just… You seemed like you needed company," Nigel moved slightly closer as he spoke. The bar was fairly busy and people were moving around them so it wasn't an odd move for the man to make. Even so, Grigg felt the air crackle between them.

"Fuck," Grigg found himself spitting the word under his breath as he felt his palms start to sweat.

"Huh?" Nigel asked.

"I… I guess talking would be good. But it's… a big thing. The reason we broke up. Or at least to her it was a big thing. For me it's just my life, so," he sighed and shrugged. "It's kind of frustrating. And of course sad. I thought we were… there were obstacles to us getting together and I thought we were beyond all that..."

Grigg trailed off and then shook his head, letting out a deep breath and shrugging it off.

"It's all kinda involved."

"I don't mind listening darling," Nigel practically purred and moved closer into his space, a gentle hand pressing to the base of Grigg's spine as more people started moving around them to get to and from the bar. Grigg shivered at the contact and was sure from Nigel's growing smirk that he felt it.

“Or… I don’t live far from here, a few minutes walk. We could get out of here?” Nigel suggested, barely more than a whisper against Grigg’s ear.

They hadn’t even made it all the way to the counter much less ordered a drink. Even so the words made him wince as he felt his cock thicken slightly - something that would be very noticeable in the lycra he was wearing. Grigg felt his face begin to heat up.

“Yeah, sure. Let’s um, do that.” Grigg nodded, suddenly breathless.

The bar was even busier as they tried to make their way out, and hitting the fresh air was welcome. Grigg could feel his face was incredibly heated, and was very glad of the poor street lighting.

“My bike,” Grigg lead them to the side street and his bike chained to the railings.

“Should be safe here, you can collect it tomorrow,” Nigel grinned. Those few words making all intentions clear if they hadn’t been before.

“Oh, sure… yeah…” Grigg wasn’t so much nervous as he was sort of out of his depth. He wasn’t exactly shy and retiring when it came to romance - or sex - generally, but with guys it always seemed more difficult. Terrifying. And Nigel’s no nonsense, almost aggressive, clarity of intent was quite a lot to take in.

“Only if you’re sure gorgeous, I want to make sure we’re on the same page,” Nigel’s tone was a little more serious. He took a step to Grigg, backing him against the side wall of the bar.

Grigg felt his heart hammering, his palms getting sweaty again and his cock… damn, his cock was now pressing quite obviously against the spandex - really leaving nothing at all to the imagination.

Nigel put an arm up, caging Grigg on one side as he stroked the other down the side of Grigg’s cheek.

“I think you need someone to take care of you as much as you need someone to listen. Would you like me to take care of you darling?” Nigel asked, moving forward into what little space remained between them. He let out an amused but appreciative hum when he clearly felt Grigg’s erection against his hip.

“I guess you could take that as a yes,” Grigg replied with a half nervous chuckle, finding himself glad that Nigel was taking such a forceful lead. He felt sure that if he turned Nigel down that would be the end of it, but his unwavering interest ensured Grigg didn't have chance for his nerves to get the best of him.

“Glad to hear it,” Nigel responded before leaning in and pressing their lips together.

His kiss was consuming. A hardness to the way he encouraged Grigg to open to his tongue, even though his lips were gentle. He ground against Grigg a little, giving his hard cock something to think about.

When Nigel pulled back, framing his hands around Grigg's face, Grigg tried to follow the kiss and whimpered when he was held back. That earned the most delighted smile from Nigel who gazed at him like a man thirsty for whatever relief Grigg was offering.

"You're so damn beautiful," Nigel muttered, nipping at his lips again for a moment before adding, "I can't wait to see how fucking gorgeous you look when you come."

Grigg swallowed, hard and let Nigel lead him by the hand.

Art commissioned from Acxadental

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Back at Nigel's place...

(this chapter is pretty much just smut)

Chapter Notes

Further to my note on the previous chapter - this chapter features feminisation and associated language. It is not meant in a derogatory way and Grigg enjoys it, but if it is something you're not comfortable with, it might be best to skip this chapter. If you do, the thing to note is that they fuck and Nigel gets Grigg in a way no one has before.

It really was only a short walk to Nigel's place. Certainly not long enough for Grigg to overthink what was happening and change his mind. Which, might have been impossible anyways the moment Nigel let them into his small apartment and immediately pressed Grigg to the wall.

The kiss was bruising and they rut against each other for several minutes as they tasted each other like over eager teenagers.

Nigel's hands slid behind him, one to the small of his back, pressing him close. The other up into his hair, not quite holding him in place but clearly enjoying the feel of his curls.

It felt strangely intimate, and Grigg couldn't help but moan at the sensation, feeling a shiver all the way from Nigel's hand down his spine and to his groin.

For his part, Grigg's hands were clutching tight to Nigel's shoulders for want of somewhere else to place them. It was maybe a little awkward, but Nigel didn't seem to mind and grunted when Grigg dug his fingers in as Nigel ground against him.

Nigel pulled back, grinning and panting. He looked like the cat who got the cream.

"Do you want to fuck me darling? Or I can fuck you, either way I want us both to come at least three times each before dawn."

Grigg bit his lower lip, not that it did anything to hold back the whimper.

He genuinely had no idea. He hadn't been penetrated by another person in a long while - another thing Jocelyn had been very much not interested in trying. And yet the thought of Nigel taking him in that way made his knees go weak.

"Jocelyn never wanted to fuck me like that," He found himself admitting as his eyes focused entirely on Nigel's lips, wanting to feel them everywhere he possibly could.

"What a fucking bitch," Nigel growled, grinning even wider as he nipped at Grigg's lips before kissing hard again.

*

Nigel wasn't sure what the fuck he had done in some other life for this karma, but he wasn't going to question it.

Grigg Harris, who had been working quietly away in his building for the last year or so under his very nose, was sent from fucking heaven. He looked like an angel, his curls all soft and framing his face perfectly. And he kissed like he wanted Nigel to own him, aggressive whilst also being sort of submissive. Wanting.

When he'd first started down this path of seduction, he had honestly been okay with any sort of sexual outcome. He didn't even care if all they did was wank over each other all night. But part of him had assumed that Grigg would want to fuck him. Maybe he was bi, maybe Nigel was just too damn hot for even a straight guy to turn down? All Nigel knew was that Grigg's most recent sexual encounters had involved pussy. It stood to reason there was every chance that Grigg would not be interested in taking it up the ass, and would feel a lot more comfortable pushing himself into Nigel's hole instead.

This was evidently a completely wrong assumption to make, he realised as he progressed them from the wall by the front door, to the wall next to his bedroom door. Not least because Grigg was using the pauses between kisses to beg Nigel to fuck him.

At this rate Nigel was going to come in his pants like a fucking teenager. He really couldn't remember the last time he'd been with anyone so beautiful. He definitely wasn't sure he'd ever been this turned on before.

When he did get any cock back in Romania, it had very much been a case of take what you can get. It was a habit he hadn't thought to break when screwing around in the States either.

Nigel pushed open his bedroom door, finally pulling back from Grigg so that it didn't take them another 30 minutes just to get to the actual fucking bed.

"Come on gorgeous," Nigel crooned as he took Grigg's hand and lead him into the room.

It was sparse and tidy. Tidy because it was sparse, because he'd brought fuck all with him from Romania and wasn't in a hurry to put down any kind of roots. Not ever really. When things had gone sideways back home he'd checked out from all of that. What was the point? The semblance of life he'd had as a criminal, married to a truly wonderful woman who he was never going to connect with in the way she thought she'd connected with him. He wasn't

sure when he was going to feel sorry for using Gabi the way he had, but it was done now and she could move on and find herself another husband who wasn't a homo.

He'd made his peace with every part of that as best he could.

And now he was living free and easy in the US, able to do as he pleased and fuck as many guys as he could possibly pick up in a weekend. What more did he need?

Nigel looked over at Grigg when he realised the man was trembling, his hand shaking ever so slightly the closer they got to the bed.

He frowned, "It's okay if you want to change your mind gorgeous. We don't need to do anything you don't want. You can leave and I won't stop you."

Grigg looked over at him, studying his face intently. He didn't look worried or scared, but there was some sort of trepidation.

Grigg shook his head, "No, it's not… I don't want to leave. I… I just can't believe I'm doing this." Grigg huffed out a chuckle, his expression breaking into a goofy grin that Nigel wanted to fucking snog off of his face.

"Sometimes we all need a little rebound fuck," Nigel growled, "and I am so happy to help you with that."

He grabbed Grigg's spandex top and let himself fall back onto the bed, taking Grigg with him. With Grigg flat on top of him there was no escaping how hard the man was through his biking shorts - which were the cutest fucking things. Nigel was half tempted to see if Grigg would let him fuck him whilst he was still wearing them, just pull them down to his thighs and let the spandex keep him tightly together.

His cock throbbed at the thought, and he grabbed Grigg's thighs and pulled them up until he was being straddled.

"Tell me how you like it darling, let me make this good for you."

He ground his crotch up into Grigg's, who let out a low, long groan and shuddered.

"I don't know…" Grigg seemed a little unsure, "It's… I haven't been with a guy since college. I'm…" Grigg trailed off and trembled.

"Are you nervous darling? I'll take care of you-"

Grigg was shaking his head, he'd closed his eyes and was circling his hips. Which was fucking delightful.

"No… Just… really turned on," Grigg's expression was that of someone trying desperately and painfully not to come.

Nigel grinned, grabbing Grigg's hips and rocking them together. Grigg let out a defeated whimper as Nigel forced their hard dicks to grind together through spandex and denim.

“Nigel, I'm-”

Grigg’s words disappeared into breathy panting as he shuddered. His face was fucking beautiful - that creased brow returned at the moment of release and then his eyes closed and his mouth went slack with pleasure. He looked like he was high and Nigel wanted to make that happen again and again.

After a moment Grigg went lax and collapsed into Nigel’s arms, burying his face in the crook of Nigel’s neck.

“Oh god, I’m so embarrassed. Sorry about… Um, sorry,” Grigg’s words were muffled and warm against his neck.

Nigel let a low laugh rumble from his chest as he stroked his hands up and down the soft lycra at Grigg’s back.

“Darling, I am making it my personal mission to see that you come so many times tonight you won’t even remember your own name, let alone anything that might be getting you down. This is just score one.”

Grigg huffed a laugh against his skin and it made Nigel shiver.

“Just need to work out how to get this fucking thing off you, gorgeous,” Nigel dragged his fingers over the skintight lycra. “Are you sure it isn’t fucking painted on?” Nigel chuckled and nuzzled against Grigg’s neck. “Maybe by the time I’ve worked out how to get it off, you’ll be hard enough again for me to get you off,” Nigel growled.

Grigg let out another light laugh and then sighed against him. And if it wasn’t the most delightful fucking thing he’d ever experienced.

*

Grigg, despite his initial nervousness, wasn’t sure the last time he’d felt so comfortable around someone.

Despite near looking like a thug, Nigel was considerate and tender in his own way. Grigg wholeheartedly believed him when he said he would take care of him and was set on bringing Grigg as much pleasure as possible. It was a kind of giving that Grigg had never experienced, and certainly not with Jocelyn. He hadn’t ever doubted her love but he also was never able to escape her desire to be obeyed in the way her dogs obeyed her. Someone who was there when she wanted them, only on her terms, and not when they needed her in return.

Grigg had been aware before their conversation about Gethen, that their relationship was incredibly one-sided on many levels. But he had been in love with her, or maybe just the idea of her? Of someone wanting him? And then it was over despite him always having done the right thing - until Gethen at least. That had been the dealbreaker. Or maybe a lucky escape, he now pondered.

He had been so sad since they broke up, but as the minutes passed in Nigel's company he realised that it wasn't because he missed Jocelyn. It suddenly seemed so clear that he didn't miss her at all. He was sad because of the reaction she'd had - that she couldn't love him once he'd told her everything. That he wasn't wanted.

Grigg clenched his jaw, a tight feeling in his chest at that before it eased off.

Nigel sat in front of him on the bed, palming his cock through his jeans as he watched Grigg with a hungry expression.

Grigg took a deep breath, studying Nigel intently, as he began to strip out of the spandex. His breath was shaky as he started to peel it away, self conscious of his actions for a moment before he thought about Jocelyn again.

He was always so conscious of how he carried himself around her, wanting to fit the mould she had pictured in her head. Be accommodating as he always was.

But Nigel was practically a stranger, and one that didn't seem like he would judge him anyway. And what would he care if he did?

Grigg swallowed, trying to suppress his nerves as he continued to strip, stroking his hands over his body, canting his hip just so. Letting the soft material peel off of him like a second skin.

"Fuck," Nigel muttered, slowly starting to undo his jeans.

Grigg felt bolstered by the reaction, dragging the material down to rest on his hips as he then stretched up. He felt feline and slinky, and wanted Nigel's hands on him, though Nigel was now too preoccupied with pulling out his dick and giving it a couple of leisurely strokes.

He was thick and uncut, the thought of having Nigel inside him made his stomach flip.

Grigg pushed the spandex over his hips, down further and further until he was able to delicately step out of them, prowling towards Nigel with what felt like borrowed confidence.

*

The little striptease was probably the hottest thing Nigel had ever fucking seen. The way Grigg held himself in an almost feminine way was fucking glorious. Nigel really couldn't claim much attraction to women, but the confidence Grigg had displaying himself like that was a fucking turn on.

He'd practically ripped his own clothes off as Grigg came to the bed, before pulling him down and rolling them, Grigg beneath him, sighing happily.

"I want to fuck you darling," Nigel voiced his intent in a husky whisper that had Grigg nodding eagerly, his jaw doing this adorable little jut that made Nigel want to kiss him.

But kissing could wait. He pulled away and grabbed the lube and a box of condoms from the side drawer, throwing them down on the bed before sitting in the centre of the bed. Without

prompting, gorgeous Grigg climbed onto him, straddling his thighs and ignoring his cock in favour of leaning in to steal a kiss.

It was sweet and soft, the little nipping bites giving away the passion of it.

As they kissed Nigel popped the cap on the lube, squeezing some onto his fingers before running them along the crease of Grigg's ass. It only took that encouragement for Grigg to scoot closer, their cocks pressed together once more, this time with nothing between them, as Nigel stroked his fingers up and down the crack of the man sat in his lap.

Their kissing became breathy as Nigel focused his efforts on Grigg's asshole, circling gently with slick digits before pushing a finger slowly to the first knuckle.

At that Grigg gasped and pulled back, his hands going to Nigel's shoulders and holding them tight as he bore down through the intrusion. His eyes were closed and he looked so fucking blissed out that Nigel wondered if anyone had ever truly fucking pleasured this man before.

Nigel pulled away to add more lube, the action met by a little disappointed huff at the loss. He returned his fingers quickly, beginning to work them in more ardently as Grigg responded with little sounds of pleasure. Nigel started to nuzzle at Grigg's jawline, enjoying the rub of their stubble together.

He couldn't stop picturing the way Grigg had moved as he stripped, and he knew he'd never truly found femininity beautiful until that moment.

Nigel wasn't one for all the 'who is the girl' bullshit, but there was something with Grigg that he couldn't quite put his finger one. He wasn't effeminate or camp - things Nigel didn't mind at all. But there was something feminine about him in a way that made Nigel's cock throb. Which was something he'd never have thought possible before that moment.

It was these thoughts that made him mutter, "You're so gorgeous darling, such lovely curves," he ran his free hand over Grigg's hips and thigh made shapely by cycling, feeling the man hesitate a little and tense up slightly.

Nigel worked his fingers slowly in and out, Grigg's fingers digging tight into the meat of Nigel's shoulders.

"Don't tense darling," Nigel crooned against his ear. "I know your tight little pussy is eager to be filled, but you have to let me in."

Grigg tightened completely at the words, his inner muscles gripping Nigel's finger as he whimpered. Nigel wondered for a moment if he were going to push Nigel away, or maybe even come again. What an amazing feat that would be, to make Grigg come untouched. Was he turned off or turned on?

Grigg relaxed then though, and Nigel couldn't help but want to make him come over and over. See how many times he could get hard this quickly.

For now he focused on the interesting reaction he had drawn from Grigg.

“You like that darling? You want me to finger your pussy open until it is wet and ready for me?”

Grigg’s fingers dug painfully deeper and he arched his back as he let out a high whimper. Definitely turned on then.

Nigel growled, thoughtful, his cock aching with knowing how this was turning Grigg on. He paused for a moment, wondering if he dared… but then what did he have to lose?

Nigel moved his lips next to Grigg’s ears and spoke in a low, soft tone, “And you have such perfect little tits too.” He slid his free hand up to squeeze Grigg's small pecs, running his thumb over the hard nipple.

Grigg shuddered, his breath escaping him as a long and shaky exhale.

As Nigel drew back Grigg’s arms came around his neck and pulled him into a hungry kiss as he pushed down on his fingers, riding them as best he could. Nigel grinned into the kiss, spreading his fingers and pushing in a third.

“You’re so gorgeous like this darling,” He muttered the words against Grigg’s lips, “so wet and tight for me, so beautiful.” Nigel dropped his head down and kissed at Grigg’s chest before taking a nipple into his mouth and gently sucking on it.

“Nigel,” His name shuddered from Grigg’s lips as he worked himself harder on Nigel’s fingers and arched into his mouth.

“Fuck, gorgeous…” Nigel groaned as he pulled back, creating space between them.

Nigel grabbed the condom from the bed and sheathed himself in it quicker than he was sure he’d ever done before in his life. He picked the lube back up and poured a generous amount onto his fingers, working it up and down his cock before spreading the surplus on Grigg’s ass and pushing it into him.

Grigg was still holding onto him, allowing hardly any room between them now as Nigel lined himself up and pushed in. Grigg gasped and clutched tighter so the Nigel could do little more than rock as he waited for Grigg to slowly relax.

“Ahnn, so nice and tight for me gorgeous. So wet. You liked riding my fingers so much you’re practically gushing, huh? You get so wet when you’re turned on, it’s fucking beautiful.” Nigel couldn’t stop the litany of words falling from his mouth. Especially with the way Grigg was reacting, undulating and whimpering against him in response.

“I love your fucking pussy darling,” That drew another soft moan which only deepened when Nigel snaked a hand up between them and cupped Grigg’s tit, squeezing it and thumbing over Grigg’s nipple again.

“Nigel unngg,” Grigg cried as he moved in time with Nigel, meeting each shallow thrust. “You… you feel so good… i-inside,” he could just tell that Grigg’s face was red hot with blushing. “Inside me… so good… you… my… my… t-t…”

Nigel grinned and leaned in, pushing Grigg's chest up a little so that he could meet nipple and lips together. Grigg loosened his arms so that Nigel could lick and suck at his nipple as Grigg continued to push down on his cock.

"Such. Great. Tits," Nigel muttered again, punctuating every word with a thrust up into Grigg's welcoming heat.

"More…" Grigg groaned.

Nigel adjust his position enough so that he was able to essentially bounce Grigg on his cock whilst nuzzling at his chest, licking his nipple, sucking it into his mouth and closing his teeth lightly around it.

That gentle pressure, combined with Nigel's firm fucking, had Grigg crying out again, and this time he was coming. Shaking as his breath hitched and he made these adorable little noises - all the while his come spilled between them. Nigel wasn't sure when he'd ever been so turned on in his life. Making someone come completely untouched on his cock felt like Christmas.

Grigg pulled Nigel closer, his hands running down his back until he was able to grab his ass, encouraging him on.

Nigel grunted against Grigg's chest as he pumped his hips, fucking up into Grigg as his ass undulated and gripped around him.

"Oh fuck gorgeous," Nigel groaned, his rhythm faltering as he spilled inside Grigg's pulsing channel. He thrust twice more, sharp and hard as he grunted, burying himself deep as he filled the condom.

They stilled and breathed together for a few minutes, sweaty and come slicked skin pressed close to each other. Finally, Nigel rolled back on the bed, taking Grigg with him, not pulling out as he settled them next to each other, holding each other.

"You feel so good darling, best pussy I've ever had."

Grigg made a noise and tried to pull away from him then, and Nigel realised he'd pushed a little too far on this kink, or whatever the fuck it was.

He silently pulled Grigg back to him soothing him with his hands. Grigg didn't resist.

Thank you Moonstag for this amazing art -

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The morning after and neither Nigel or Grigg are ready to say goodbye...

Grigg blinked his eyes open, realising immediately the heavy arm around him. Not exactly how he had woken many times in his life. In fact he could count them on one hand, and most were the same guy he'd hooked up with a few times at college. Usually after a heavy night of drinking, fumbling and then passing out - his companion always leaving in a panicked hurry the next morning.

It was no surprise that he'd been more nervous and reticent with men than women, when the recurring experiences he'd had of men had been sleeping with someone who had to be drunk to do so. And then there was the waking to them experiencing gay panic every damn time, being ignored on campus until the next time the guy wanted to fuck around.

It had been disconcerting and Grigg realised he had grown to expect and be wary of it, if not outright avoid it.

Part of him expected it from Nigel. But then he thought back on the less than 24 hours that he'd known him, and was pretty sure the guy was as far from a gay panic as anyone could get.

As if on cue, Nigel's arm tightened around him and he nuzzled into the nape of Grigg's neck. Nigel took a deep breath and let out a little hum of approval at Grigg's no doubt sex and sweat ladened odour.

"Mmm, you smell like you've been well fucked gorgeous, and I'm delighted to have had a part in that," He felt Nigel's mouth curve against his skin, his teeth exposed to Grigg's flesh by the feral grin.

Grigg let out a contented sigh and sank back against Nigel, feeling the fuzz of his chest against his back and enjoying the sensation of it. He'd never really indulged like this when he'd been with guys before.

"This is nice," Grigg didn't mean to say it out loud, expecting Nigel to recoil as a result. Instead Nigel just hummed again and pulled Grigg tighter to him, his hardening dick slotting against Grigg's ass.

Grigg felt his own twitch and begin to fill in response, a blush rising on his face as it did so.

Memories of the night before flashed into Grigg's mind and he shuddered. His face heated further and he went rigid in Nigel's arms. He had been… very free with himself. He'd

explored a very private side of himself with Nigel after only a couple of hours of knowing him, and initiated by Nigel rather than himself. It had been somewhat of a revelation. One which he was now deeply conscious of.

“I… I should go…” Grigg started to pull away, and for a moment Nigel let him as though surprised. But then he reacted and gently pulled Grigg back to his chest.

“What’s the hurry, gorgeous? I was going to invite you to shower with me,” He could hear the grin in Nigel’s voice. Thankfully the man loosened his hold as Grigg wriggled forward, clearly no intention of impeding him if he really did want to leave.

Grigg was going to rise out of the bed completely, but changed his mind and instead used the space between them to turn over until he was face to face with Nigel. It felt like, after really a wonderful evening, the least he owed him was an explanation or apology or *something*.

“I’m… Thank you for last night, I’m sorry if I made things weird,” His cheeks were hot again and he knew he was likely just making things worse. He was so awkward around this whole thing. *The Gethen thing*, as Jocelyn had called it after the comparisons he’d made to the Le Guin book.

Grigg wasn’t sure how to explain it all to Nigel, but it struck him - he really had no need to. He didn’t owe anything to Nigel and this might even only be a one night thing. Which, he had to admit, made him feel a little disappointed. It was the most enjoyable night he’d had in a long while - including those with Jocelyn. Not just the sex but the intimacy and comfort, right down to the feel of the man and the way he treated him. It was just… so beyond anything he’d had with anyone else. Nigel seemed to understand him on a physical level with barely any words between them. It was something Grigg had never considered might exist out there for him and he was loathe to let it go.

“You’re thinking too hard gorgeous,” Nigel’s voice was a low rumble and he reached his hand up to smooth his thumb over a frown Grigg hadn’t realised he had. He let his brow relax and found himself smiling without even meaning to. Nigel leaned in and pressed a gentle kiss to his lips.

It was soft and domestic, as though they woke every morning like this. Maybe Nigel was like this with all his hookups? The thought caused a bitter little ball in Grigg’s stomach, though he knew he had no right to it.

Nigel’s hand moved until it was cupping Grigg’s cheek, softly holding him in place as he deepened the kiss with no apparent care for morning breath.

The kiss was languid, lazy. Slow. Grigg found himself relaxing back into the pillow. Nigel made no move to overpower him, content to remain in the unassuming embrace as they made out with no expectation of more. It was the best way he’d ever started a day.

Grigg chuckled and pulled back, “Nigel, I really do need to get my bike and…” He trailed off, not finishing the sentence because really, it was the weekend and he was his own boss. He could do whatever he liked.

Nigel was watching him intently, waiting to see what he said - possibly so he could form his own counter argument. And Grigg, well he really wanted Nigel to not let him leave. But life wasn't that simple, and he was incredibly aware that this was a casual hookup and he was on the rebound. Even if he hadn't thought about Jocelyn since he left work yesterday, other than the brief mention last night.

"Nigel I… I'd like to stay longer but… I think maybe we should make clear what's going on here first. I don't want any misunderstandings," Grigg chose his words carefully, though wasn't certain he'd chosen the right ones. He'd spent months enduring all the misunderstandings that Jovelyn pushed him into before she finally decided she wanted him. He wasn't going to let anyone do that to him again. "And if it's just casual, that's fine. I mean… I'm just coming back from a break up and-"

"Darling, as long as I get to fuck around with you a hell of a lot more, I'm happy," Nigel cut him off with a grin before moving forward again.

Grigg frowned and held him back, his hands pressed to Nigel's shoulders.

"I mean it, we need to be clear." Grigg near huffed. "I've already been kept off kilter by someone whilst I spent the whole time trying to figure out where I was going wrong. If this is just casual I need to know that."

Nigel cocked his head, his smile not quite a smirk - something a little more gentle.

"Darling, casual is fine, I think the kids call it fuck buddies." Nigel chuckled, "I can't think of anything better than knowing, when you leave here, it won't be the last I see of your perfect ass," Nigel swiped his tongue over Grigg's mouth and Grigg couldn't hold back the shudder. His cock was already starting to get painfully hard.

"So… you want to… again? Like not just now. But…"

"I'll give you my number gorgeous, any time you want some casual fucking, I will be there in a heartbeat."

Grigg shuddered, his hands no longer pressing back as Nigel moved forward to claim his mouth.

*

It took everything in Nigel not to keep Grigg in that fucking bed all day... fucking or otherwise.

There was something about the guy that was driving him crazy, even after just one night. He had butterflies in his stomach and it wasn't just the sex. He had never before just snuggled in bed gently kissing. It was usually fuck and done. Sometimes just in the clubs, not even making it to an actual house let alone a fucking bedroom.

He usually didn't have an interest in anything beyond that - wanting to make the most of being footloose and fancy free these days. He wanted to get as much cock as was humanly

possible in this short life, and up until now those cocks had all been attached to different people. None of which he had ever allowed, or been remotely tempted to allow, to stay over.

But now Nigel was very much all about one cock. Grigg's cock. And he desperately didn't want to let him leave. His heart had been in his throat when Grigg woke up and said he should go. He wasn't about to physically restrain the guy, though keeping him there liplocked was working out just fine. Nigel really didn't want him to leave… Hadn't been ready for him to leave.

He was trying to be okay with keeping things casual. At first he thought that was what Grigg was asking, and by the time he wondered whether other options were available, it became clear that was perhaps all Grigg could give. The guy was coming out of a shitty break up for fucksake, he wasn't going to muscle in and force something more when Grigg was clearly in a vulnerable place. Nigel wasn't even sure he was interested in something other than casual, or at least he was telling himself that.

But he would happily fuck around with the guy every chance he got. And maybe that was what Grigg needed? Nigel would like to try and convince himself that he would be okay with *just* casual sex. But he knew himself well enough to know he was already fighting heart eyes for this beautiful fucking nerd.

Nigel pushed the thoughts down. Grigg didn't deserve to face the brunt of his obsessive personality, he just needed to keep that shit in check.

"Time for one last orgasm before you leave, darling?" Nigel grinned.

Grigg lay butt naked, face down, snuggled into a pillow. After another fuck session, a shower and then a snack, they'd ended up back in bed for snuggles - another thing that Grigg seemed to need and Nigel was happy to provide. He'd fallen asleep almost immediately, leaving Nigel to watch him like a total creep.

Fuck he was perfect. Not just because he was definitely Nigel's type and they'd already spent most of the night making each other cum, but everything! His skin was oh so smooth and lightly tanned from the Californian sun. His hair was soft and wild now that Nigel had had his hands in it so many times. His cock and ass were the kind carved on statues you find in museums. His smile was angelic. If that wasn't enough, he was fucking smart and ambitious, Nigel just loved to fucking listen to him talk.

Grigg sleepily hummed, bringing a smile to Nigel's face.

Fuck. This was actually fucking amazing and Nigel was loving it. The thought of having this man in his bed again and again filled him with a warm fuzzy feeling.

Unable to help himself, Nigel climbed over Grigg, laying flat on his back and burying his nose in the crook of his neck. He sunk completely onto the man below him who let out an appreciative sound and nuzzled his face further into the pillow.

"You're so fucking sexy," Nigel murmured against his skin, at which Grigg hummed again and then pressed his ass up, grinding it against Nigel's cock.

Nigel's chuckle became a groan and he wriggled so that his now hardening cock was nestled in the crevice of Grigg's ass. They moved slowly together for a minute, lazy friction between them as Nigel relaxed against Grigg.

Before he had chance to take full advantage, Nigel nodded off, dreaming of how many times they might come again before he finally let Grigg go home.

*

Zeller wouldn't stop glancing at him. Grigg wasn't sure at first whether to be amused or annoyed. It had been going on most of the morning and it was starting to put Grigg on edge. He considered going to the bathroom and washing his face, but it felt like that would draw more attention.

He wasn't sure what the hell had possessed him. He just… he'd felt so good about himself after the weekend and had felt confident enough to do it. To be himself that little bit more.

Neither Bev nor Jimmy, the two engineers working from the office today, had batted an eye when they'd arrived. Maybe they just hadn't noticed?

"Uh, Grigg… you-" Zeller started and Grigg froze, wondering what he might say, but he was cut off when the office door opened and Nigel strode in, grinning.

"Lunch, gorgeous?" He asked as Grigg nervously turned to face him.

Nigel's face lit up, his mouth curving into a grin as he bit into his lower lip. It was damn near predatory and made Grigg's heart skip a beat.

"You look fucking beautiful," Nigel growled, stepping into the room and towards Grigg. He was almost there - clearly about to reach for Grigg - when he spotted Zeller. He stopped flashed a smile at Grigg's colleague, "how do you concentrate with this beauty around?" Nigel teased.

Both Grigg and Zeller flushed, though Grigg was sure his face was far more red than that of his assistant. He had found the eyeliner in the little box of things he kept, things he bought and then hid away and tried to forget about. He had applied it with a shaky hand and been surprised at how amazing it made him feel. But that was before he left the house and his confidence had been yo-yoing painfully all morning.

Nigel turned back to Grigg, keeping a respectful distance. "Do you want to get some lunch? I've brought along that catalogue I mentioned," Nigel's tone was now somewhat professional, even though Grigg had no idea what he was referring to. "The office equipment, you can choose the chair you want. Get a fancy one with gidgets and gadgets. It'll be like a fucking spaceship."

"Oh!" Grigg raised his brows in realisation, "Right, that would be great."

"Great," Nigel repeated, turning on his heel and leaving with a clear expectation that Grigg would follow.

“Um, I’m… going to lunch. To, um, look at chairs,” Grigg told Zeller, who was now somehow gawping and frowning at the same time.

Grigg hesitated only a moment and then followed Nigel.

*

When Nigel had first laid eyes on Grigg it had taken all the restraint he could muster not to push him up against the wall and rut against him.

Nigel hadn’t ever thought much one way or the other about men wearing makeup. He’d never really thought much about women wearing it, though he could acknowledge a well made effort. But fuck! The barely there eyeliner Grigg was wearing made his ocean deep eyes pop. Rather than feminine, it made him look somewhat more male in a punk kind of way. Or maybe more androgynous like David Bowie, which Nigel had no idea he’d find a turn on until his dick twitched in his jeans and let him know that was in fact the case.

He started back to his office, clenching and unclenching his fists, knowing Grigg followed behind him through what seemed like far too many hallways, resisting the urge to turn and kiss the man.

The resistance lasted as far as his office door, which he unlocked in record time before turning and grabbing Grigg by the shirt and dragging him inside. Within moments he had the door closed behind them and Grigg pressed against it.

“Fuck darling, I almost ravaged you in your office. If I hadn’t realised Zeller was there I fucking might have,” Nigel chuckled against Grigg’s mouth before pressing their lips together in a firm kiss.

Grigg allowed it for a few minutes, before gently running his hands up to Nigel’s shoulders and pushing him back. He was grinning at Nigel though, he hadn’t pushed him off because he didn’t want him - which relieved Nigel. As he really hadn’t been sure if he’d crossed a line. But Grigg’s smile was something else, it lit up the fucking room.

“It looks okay?” There was an excited lilt to his quiet words.

“You look amazing, gorgeous,” Nigel encouraged, finding himself returning the grin without thinking about it.

Grigg blushed and looked down, and Nigel had to stop himself from grabbing his chin and pulling his face back up.

“Thank you,” Grigg muttered, “I… I don’t usually, but uh, I felt um, after the weekend I felt…” Grigg swallowed and looked back up to him, a sort of imploring expression. Willing him to understand. Which maybe he did. Whatever this was that was going on with Grigg, it was clear that the weekend had given him some freedom to explore it in some way. And Nigel couldn’t help but feel pretty good about that.

He moved his hand up to run a thumb over Grigg's bottom lip, wondering what he would look like in a pale pink lipstick. Grigg let out a low moan as his hands slipped up around Nigel's neck and they were somehow kissing again.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

With things getting a little out of control, Grigg thinks it's time to set some firmer ground rules with Nigel

Chapter Notes

I'm now onto writing chapter 8 and hope to start posting regularly (hopefully weekly) once I Miss You has finished posting.

The last three weeks had been wonderful and reckless.

Not least because he wondered if there was a chance of Nigel getting fired or himself being evicted by the building management, should someone find them fucking in Nigel's office. Which had now happened several times. The last time he had clearly looked well and truly fucked when he got back from his lunch and Bev Katz gave him a knowing look and a quick wink.

Grigg wasn't sure of the last time he had blushed so hard.

It was getting too reckless and Grigg was loving it. He had never been free with himself like this before, never just… not cared. But he knew he should. He'd worked hard to build his own successful business, he couldn't throw it away over some guy he, really, barely knew. Even if…

He shook the thought away. Fucking around with Nigel as a rebound casual thing was one thing. Could he imagine himself being in a relationship with a guy? If pressed, maybe he'd say he was bisexual but probably an 80/20 split in favour of women. Twenty percent wasn't enough think about getting serious with a man. Turning his whole life upside down like that, like the way his sister Kat had when she married her girlfriend, because bi people were just experimenting, right? She'd been hassled so much over it by straight and gay people alike.

He didn't want to deal with all that for only liking guys twenty percent of the time. Was that how it worked? Because after less than a month he was sure he liked Nigel one hundred percent of the time and that terrified him.

It was Tuesday when Nigel tried to lure him away on his lunch break, but Grigg had already steeled himself. For a multitude of reasons ranging from Nigel getting fired to Grigg maybe

falling in love with him if he gave it half a chance, he put a stop to it.

“Sorry, I’m busy, I… have some things I need to take care of for the engineering team,” Grigg muttered, trying to sound convincing as he kicked himself for not having come up with a prepared excuse ahead of time despite having agonised over this.

He ignored Zeller’s look across the office and hoped that Nigel didn’t catch it.

“No problem Mr Harris, I can look into those…. uh, light fixtures and come back to you,” Nigel looked disappointed for a moment but unphased. He gave them both a nod and disappeared back around the door.

“Uh,” Zeller started, sounding somewhere between concerned and uncomfortable, “you guys, um… doing okay?”

“What?!” Grigg felt the blood drain from his face and an unsettling panic washed over him.

“You and Nigel, you’re uh… together, right?”

“I… Uh…” Grigg’s face heated as the rest of his body broke into a cold sweat.

Zeller held up his hands, looking as awkward as Grigg felt, “Look man, it’s none of my business. I was just… You’ve been really happy the last few weeks and it… It didn’t seem much of a secret that you guys were… boning or whatever-”

“Oh god!” Grigg exclaimed, burying his burning face in his hands and feeling sick in the pit of his stomach. They had clearly been a lot more obvious than he had realised.

Of course they had! The lingering looks when they happened upon each other. The fact that they were always seeing each other under a ruse of his ordering office equipment or getting something fixed or upgraded - and yet none of these things became evident. Except that original one - his new chair.

“I… Uh,” Grigg stammered again.

“Look, it’s cool, no one is…. Like, everyone is cool with it. To be honest, I think we’re all just happy you aren’t miserable anymore..”

There was a moment of silence and Zeller cleared his throat before making himself busy and effectively ending the conversation.

“I uh…” Grigg struggled once more before standing abruptly, “I need to get some lunch.”

That had been Tuesday, and for the rest of the week Grigg went out of his way to avoid Nigel. When he turned down his lunchtime advances again on Wednesday he didn’t renew them the rest of the week. Maybe he was being respectful of the boundary Grigg was silently establishing, or maybe he was just losing interest. The thought of that made Grigg feel terrible on many different levels, but he was completely unsure how to address it.

By Friday they hadn't even glimpsed each other for a day. Grigg hadn't realised before he knew him, how often he'd seen Nigel around and just not really noticed him as he went about his job. They hadn't had direct contact until the chair incident. Now his absence was noticeable and Grigg wondered if Nigel was avoiding *him*. The thought made him ache.

Perhaps he should call him? Message him?

The thought sent a sudden chill through Grigg. With Jocelyn the effort had been all his, he had done all the running. And whilst what he had with Nigel wasn't the same - something more free and casual - he couldn't do that again.

If Nigel wanted to back off then he wouldn't chase after him.

*

Nigel hadn't been to this night club in a while but he remembered it being a pretty good bet for getting his cock sucked. It was loud, busy - always packed. The dance floor essentially extended to the bar, so people could press on each other the length and breadth of the place.

He stood at the bar knocking back a pint, content to let the occasional twink come over and grind on his half interested cock before they moved on. One or two he thought idly about taking into the bathrooms. Maybe for a suck or a fuck, he wasn't sure which. He… didn't want to take them home. He had before now and then, but it seemed odd to do that - take them to that personal space with Grigg in the picture.

But that was casual too, right?

The week had been fucking awkward and it was the first Friday night in about a month that Grigg hadn't been in his bed. This definitely was not to Nigel's liking

Unlike Grigg himself, who was, increasingly, very much to his liking.

He was not in anyway able to deny that he was totally falling for the slightly goofy, smart, funny and fucking gorgeous man. He could tell something was holding Grigg back, and whether that be his break up or the unspoken thing that he was waiting for Grigg to confide in him, he wasn't sure.

Their first night together it had been obvious that there was something Grigg was just touching the surface of exploring, and he'd be all in for helping with that. But Grigg had backed off from it in the bedroom, maybe taking stock again and unsure how to move forward. Nigel would wait.

Nigel had decided not to push it. He didn't want to scare Grigg off, and if casual was all he could do then Nigel would take it. He'd take everything Grigg would give and call himself an idiot for it.

And he really was a fucking idiot. It was just too good to be true that this was what he wished he'd been able to have with Gabi, and now maybe he could have that for real? Not that he fucking deserved it after how he treated her.

Here he stood in a fucking bar, looking to get his end away because the person he'd been hooking up with seemed not to be giving him the time of day. It wasn't like they owed each other anything - friends with benefits, right?

Fuck it

Nigel downed the last of his pint and started towards the bathrooms, eyeing potential new friends along the way. There were a few he locked eyes with, gave a look up and down. It was a twink from the bar earlier that caught his eye for more than a moment - gorgeous pouting lips, looked like he was wearing lipstick. It wasn't something he cared for one way or the other usually, but then Grigg flashed to mind. He had started to occasionally wear eyeliner to work - and it looked fucking gorgeous.

Nigel's cock gave a twitch of interest.

In that moment, the twink was on him, arms around his neck and grinding in time to the music as their mutual intent of a bathroom rendezvous became clear. He was light and Nigel was able to keep moving forward with him essentially attached like a limpet, those lovely lips finding purchase on his neck. That made Nigel stop in his tracks.

Grigg was the only person who had touched him in weeks and this felt strange. Not just the unfamiliarity - where before the unfamiliarity of stranger after stranger had never been an issue - it felt fucking wrong.

"Want me to suck your cock? I really wanna…" The man poured the words into his ear and Nigel's cock couldn't help but show interest, even as his mind flicked to Grigg. The number of times he'd gone down on that gorgeous man now. The couple of furtive and fucking adorable times the inexperienced Grigg had sucked him off in return.

"Fuck," Nigel muttered.

He was hard and this kid was grinding against him and all he could think of was having Grigg in his bed again as soon as possible. Hoping whatever this weirdness had been during the working week wasn't Grigg wanting to call this quits.

They'd fucked a lot at his place and even at work, and Grigg seemed to have enjoyed all of it. But maybe he was done? Nigel was the first guy he'd properly been with since some college experimenting, from what he said, maybe this was just more experimentation and he was done?

Nigel was dragged from his thoughts by a firm hand palming over his cock, "Are going to the backroom or shall I drop to my knees right here?" The words were followed by a flirtatious giggle.

It was just… not Grigg.

Nigel winced and took hold of the kid's arms, holding him away at arm's reach.

“Sorry, just remembered I have to be somewhere,” Nigel muttered like a fucking loser and then turned and walked off.

He heard his spurned would-be-lover respond, “Asshole,” but continued to walk.

*

When Nigel got home he showered and went to bed. It was only just midnight, which seemed a fucking waste of an evening but too late to message Grigg, right? Yeah, it was too fucking late even if his dick was still trying to convince him it wasn’t.

Nigel sighed and relaxed back against his pillows, his mind replaying Grigg going down on him, and he was fucking hard again within moments.

He practically growled with something close to annoyance at himself and his lack of ability to let someone suck his fucking dick. They were meant to be casual and totally not exclusive. This was a fucking joke and his cock was laughing at him.

It was only after a couple of long, slow pulls on his cock that the image shifted to their first night together. He hadn’t talked to Grigg like that again since that night. Though he longed to, it was such a fucking turn on - for them both as far as he could tell. But that night it felt like he’d pushed it maybe a little too hard, harder than Grigg was ready for. So it would be best to let him bring it up again if he wanted to, right?

Nigel grunted, reminding himself that communication wasn’t always his strongest point, as he jerked his cock to thoughts of being buried in Griggs ‘tight pussy’. Fuck, it was so hot, the way Grigg seemed so into it. More than that, it seemed like it freed something within him.

Nigel had done some bedroom roleplay in the past - trying out kinks and such - it definitely could be freeing but this was something more.

All it took was Grigg’s voice in his head begging, no, fucking ordering ‘Fuck me harder Nigel,’ and Nigel came all over his fist.

As he lay there panting, coming down from a pretty amazing solo orgasm, he had to stop himself from grabbing his phone. Fuck, he wanted Grigg in his bed. And not even just to fool around. He had started to enjoy those times after when, instead of kicking Grigg out, they wrapped themselves around each other a drifted into a warm, sated, sleep.

Nigel let out a sigh, grabbing a tissue from the bedside table and cleaning himself. The come already felt cold and grim.

When he woke the next morning, the first thing Nigel did was grab his phone from the bedside table, quickly composing a message inviting Grigg for lunch, before he could stop himself.

The reply was swift.

~As friends or as friends with benefits?

It felt like such a fucking awkward thing for Grigg to say and Nigel had to wonder how long that had been playing on his mind. A clarification of where they stood? Was that why he had been standoffish at the office? Maybe he wasn't backing off so much as trying to find where the boundaries were. Which, well Nigel couldn't fucking blame him. It was hard to know where the boundaries were when they were making out every other lunchtime and had fucked in Nigel's office more than once.

It took everything in him not to reply - "a date".

~Whatever works for you darling, I'm hungry and I don't mind eating your ass for dessert if you're willing.

He was only half joking - trying to set Grigg at ease. But he couldn't help the wicked grin, especially when the response came quickly back -

~Carlo's in an hour

Nigel chuckled. Yeah, he was happy to work with whatever boundaries Grigg wanted to firm up, as long as it also involved firming up their cocks whenever he deemed appropriate.

*

"Nigel, oh my god," Grigg both spoke and laughed with his mouthful of food and fork still in hand, which was better than him spitting it out, which had also been a close thing.

"What?" Nigel tried to claim innocence but Grigg wasn't buying it for a moment.

Grigg chuckled as he swallowed his mouthful, shaking his head at Nigel, "You can't say stuff like that about my colleagues."

Nigel raised a brow at that and replied, matter-of-factly, "Aren't you their boss!"

"Yes, but they are still my colleagues and you still can't talk about people like that," Grigg was trying so hard not to grin.

"Hey, all I'm saying is Zeller would be more pleasant if he'd take it up the-"

Grigg was out of his chair and leaning over the table to clamp a hand on Nigel's mouth before he could even think. And certainly before Nigel could utter more profanities on the nice decking area. This was a respectable cafe and they were already getting very bizarre looks.

Maybe he shouldn't have worn his cycling shorts?

"He's not gay," Grigg countered as he removed his hand and went to sit back down.

Grigg paused for a moment when he realised that Nigel had snatched his hand, drawing it back to his mouth to place a kiss on the palm before moving it to the tabletop and covering it with his own.

Grigg was surprised his gulp wasn't audible.

"Don't have to be gay to enjoy that, darling," Nigel winked and rubbed his thumb over the back of Grigg's hand for a moment.

He'd never been on the receiving end of, what seemed like, thoughtful romance. These little gestures seemed to be completely second nature to Nigel. He was an affectionate person, Grigg knew from their sleepovers, he liked intimacy. But Grigg had never imagined something like this, nor the fact that this felt more and more like a date and so natural.

The thought made his chest swell, but his stomach sink.

Grigg slipped his hand from under Nigel's and picked up his fork again. Nigel gave no outward sign of any emotion over this one way or the other, as though Grigg's hand had never been there. Leaving Grigg unsure on that count as he went back to quietly eating his salad.

A few mouthfuls later, whilst Nigel relaxed back and sipped at his massive mug of coffee, Grigg cleared his throat.

"I… I think we need to establish some… We need to stop acting like horny teenagers," Grigg said with as much determination as he could muster.

Nigel's grin was lopsided and indulgent, as though he could think a million other, probably more explicit, ways of describing how they'd been acting.

"Anything you want, gorgeous," Nigel rumbled, sending a shiver over Grigg that nearly crumbled his resolve.

"We… we can't keep… Um, at work. It's not okay, we shouldn't be doing that," Grigg forced himself not to break eye contact, though Nigel's gaze was penetrating.

"Darling, all you had to do was say so. I was worried that you weren't interested in our little arrangement anymore. Which is fine, if you want us to go our separate ways, but you're always welcome at mine for sleepovers," Nigel grinned.

"I just… I'm enjoying what we have… are you?" Grigg found himself asking and he wasn't sure why. Maybe it all still felt on the fence, like Nigel was either just going along with him or wanted more and not this thing in between.

Self projection much?

Nigel leaned forward, smouldering at him as he asked, "Would you like me to answer that somewhere more private?"

Grigg gulped again.

*

“Ahhnnnhg, fuck Grigg, you’re getting so good at that gorgeous, you know just where to...unhhhgg” Nigel’s legs nearly buckled as Grigg pressed his tongue against the slit of his cock, applying a dizzying pressure.

They had only just made it through the door to Nigel’s apartment when Grigg had pushed him against the door, effectively slamming it closed, and gone down to his knees.

And now he was looking up at Nigel with a wide gaze as his lips stretched around Nigel’s cock - which had been hard pretty much as soon as they’d paid the bill at the cafe. Nigel let a hand fall into Grigg’s curls, marginally longer than when they first met, he liked playing with them.

“Your beautiful fucking mouth,” Nigel muttered, willing himself to stay upright a little longer.

Grigg whimpered at the words and drew slowly off him, he wiped the back of his hand across his mouth before looking up at Nigel with a plea in his eyes.

“Will you… um, the things you said the night we met… Will you… Uh, can you talk to me like-” Grigg cut himself off before looking around furtively.

Nigel wasn’t sure how he felt about using feminising language to someone practically subjugated on their knees before him. That seemed a bit fucked up on some count, and whilst he wanted to humour Grigg, he couldn’t do it at the expense of his own comfort. If he was going to dirty talk Grigg the way he liked it, then Nigel was going to do it his way.

“Oh, gorgeous girl,” Nigel crooned softly, moving his hand from Grigg’s hair to cup his face. “So few things compare to your beautiful fucking lips wrapped around my cock.”

Nigel had a sudden flash of an image - of Grigg wearing lipstick as he’d imagined the night before. It made his cock twitch in Grigg’s mouth, pulling forth a groan.

“Darling I’m going to buy you a whole fucking set of lipsticks, see which colour looks best on you and then let you spread it all over my cock as you suck me off,” Nigel’s heart pounded at the thought and Grigg let out another low moan.

Grigg pulled abruptly off him and got to his feet, slamming Nigel against the door once more as their mouths met. Nigel could taste his precome on Grigg’s tongue and imagine the lipstick being smeared across his lips. Something he’d, until recently, only associated with women, it felt like in reality had always been intended for use by Grigg. Just awaiting him, regardless of gender.

Grigg took his cock in hand and pumped it slowly as he panted, clearly trying to catch his breath from having gotten more worked up than Nigel had realised.

“Will you fuck me Nigel? I want you to…” Grigg buried his face in the crook of Nigel’s neck and Nigel could feel his skin burning. “I want to feel you inside me, I-I’m so wet for you. I want you to finger me, feel how… how wet I am for you.”

Nigel's chest swelled at the words, along with his cock. Not just a fucking turn on, it felt like growth for Grigg. Something he'd been wanting to say, to express for quite some time and had never managed. Maybe it was fear holding him back, having been rejected before. Because that's what he had been getting at wasn't it? His shitty ex had not wanted this side of him, this Grigg.

Well, that was definitely not the case for Nigel.

"I can't fucking wait gorgeous, I'm gonna fucking eat you out and play with your sweet pussy until you are begging for me to let you come," He rumbled the words next to Grigg's ear and felt the man shiver.

Nigel scooped his hands under Grigg's ass and hoisted him up, Grigg's legs going immediately around his waist. They stood for a moment, grinding and kissing until Nigel started to walk them into the bedroom, ready to make good his promises.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Grigg explains The Gethen Thing.

Chapter Notes

okay, so I know some people weren't happy with Grigg's behaviour in previous chapters. You might not like the very end of this one either then... I'm gonna say up front, Grigg is a mess. He's going through something and whilst having Nigel there is a massive support, it also complicates things for him (which is not Nigel's fault, but Grigg is a mess). That's kinda the crux of the first half of this story. A combination of what Grigg is going through, and how things went with Jocelyn, means he likely isn't treating Nigel as well as he should. And whilst that sucks, that's just how things are for now. Grigg will become more aware of this, and he will do something to stop it. But for now, sorry you might hate Grigg. Don't @ me.

As he woke in Nigel's bed to memories of the night before, Grigg felt a weird mixture of embarrassed and sated, on all levels.

It was the first time Nigel had, essentially, feminised him since that first night. He'd wanted it so many times but it had taken a while to get up the nerve to ask. And now his face heated just thinking about it, what Nigel must think of him?!

He must come across as some desperate, kink seeking weirdo to ask a gay man to treat him in this way. But he was loving it, the way Nigel managed to do it without being degrading, which seemed to be a norm in a lot of the porn he'd' found.

Grigg knew he had to explain all this to Nigel, but he wasn't sure he even understood all of it himself.

The Gethen thing.

Using The Left Hand of Darkness as a reference when trying to explain it to Jocelyn had made sense. Not just because the book had resonated with him and had been part of his awakening to that other side of himself, but also because she'd read it. She understood immediately the reference even if she hadn't quite grasped what was going on with Grigg. Or maybe she just hadn't been inclined to grasp it.

It didn't matter now, what mattered was Nigel. Because even if this was just a casual thing, he should explain to him. For one thing he didn't want Nigel to just see this as a kink. It wasn't… It was… Grigg found it hard to name it. It was part of him, and there was probably a suitable label for it, he knew he might find with some googling.

If he was going to keep being this way with Nigel, being free and not hiding himself as he'd done his whole damn life even when he hadn't realised he'd been doing so, then he needed to explain as well as he could.

"Mmm, morning gorgeous," Nigel's voice was sleep heavy. The arm he'd had slung loosely around Grigg's waist tightened and he pulled him close, as he mumbled next to Grigg's ear. "You smell so good."

The words were sleepy and Nigel nuzzled into him a moment before he seemed to start drifting back into sleep.

Grigg smiled. Casual or not, he enjoyed this easy intimacy they had.

When Nigel started snoring softly, Grigg slipped from his grasp and went to bathroom to freshen up. He took the time to check his phone in case of work issues, but found a message from his sister Kat instead. He read it briefly and decided to worry about it another time. Today he wanted to just enjoy Nigel for as long as he could.

He wasn't gone long but when he came back Nigel was awake, still laying out in the bed but turning sharply when Grigg came back into the room, a smile spreading over his face,

"I thought you'd left," Nigel admitted, clearly pleased that he hadn't. Nigel pulled back the covers, revealing his wonderful nudity as invitation. Grigg took it, sliding into Nigel's arms and allowing himself to be nuzzled against once more as Nigel tried to fuse their bodies together.

God, Grigg loved it. He had never had this intensity of intimacy before with anyone, not even Jocelyn and it was pretty addictive. He had to keep reminding himself that this was only friends with benefits. And that was okay, he'd take however Nigel wanted to play that.

*

It had become a bit of a routine when Grigg stayed at weekends, for them to spend as much time in bed together as possible. Even if they weren't fucking, or even kissing and anything else in between. It was just nice to chill there, listen to music or watch TV whilst, read books… Whilst naked and sharing gentle touches here and there.

It was fucking perfect to be honest. Nigel had never had this with anyone before in his life… except Gabi. Or at least with her it had been a poor facsimile of what this was. Poor kid.

"What are you thinking about?" Grigg asked, clearly clocking the frown that had grown on his face and maybe worried it might mean something it didn't. Grigg remained a little skittish, like he was expecting Nigel to throw him out at any moment, or even be repulsed by him. Neither of these things were ever going to happen!

“I was thinking about my ex… I was… A shit. A complete fucking shit.I broke both our hearts and I…” He shook his head, this was too fucking heavy.

“Tell me,” Grigg encouraged, “it’s not like I haven’t dumped on you about this sort of thing and… I’m… I’m interested,” The caution in Grigg’s tone hurt but he understood it. They weren’t together, not really, they weren’t sharing past relationships with each other… except they were.

Nigel clenched his jaw, “We were married. That’s how much of a cunt I am. She was perfect, right place and right time for me to use to my advantage. To keep myself safely in the closet. I used her and I’ll never forgive myself for it.”

Grigg frowned and then stroked a sympathetic hand over his arm, not that Nigel deserved the comfort.

“I did love her, in my own way. She’s a wonderful person and we got on well. If she’d been a guy she’d have been perfect,” Nigel continued, feeling Grigg’s hand hesitate ever so slightly at that admission.

“People cope however they can when they are closeted,” Grigg offered softly. “I’m not excusing it but, Nigel, you’re far from the first gay man to marry a woman to try and live that expected life.”

Nigel appreciated the sentiment but frowned and shook his head to dismiss it, “Nah, see I knew I was gay. I wasn’t trying to convince myself and then realised. I knew all along and needed a beard. I never told her, not until the end and… I mean, she left me anyway,” Nigel chuckled. “For some American shitweasel, well… before that. She didn’t like my...uh, my job. It made things difficult for us, and I guess she’d served her purpose enough for me or maybe I had a little bit of a fucking conscience, but I let her go. Put up a visible fight, hated her new boyfriend - which wasn’t fucking hard. Anyway, I just want her to be happy. I’m ashamed of the way I treated her.”

There was silence between them for a moment and then Grigg snuggled against him, pulling Nigel’s head against his chest, pillowed by his non-existent bossom. He appreciated it.

“Don’t go fucking feeling sorry for me, I don’t deserve it,”

He felt Grigg nod, “Okay, but I’m glad you told me.”

Nigel smiled against his skin, “As this appears to be a day of heart to hearts… you know you can tell me, right gorgeous? What it is that’s going on with you. It’s okay if you don’t want to, but I’ll listen if you want me to hear it, I’ll be here for you.”

*

Grigg shuddered at Nigel’s words, and his first thought was to pull away, which he did. He sat in the bed for a moment, noting that Nigel remained still - nonthreatening.

He took a breath before scooching down and settling against Nigel, letting his arms envelop him as they began to softly carases in that intimate way they'd become accustomed to.

"There's a book…" Grigg started tentatively, "It's science fiction and it's about an envoy that goes to a distant planet to get them to join this sort of… interplanetary community. Anyway, this planet he's sent to, the aliens that live there have, um… well they kind of have neither and both genders at the same time."

He eyed Nigel for a reaction, of which none was forthcoming as he continued to stroke fingers along Grigg's side and listen with closed eyes.

Grigg cleared his throat before continuing, "They are sort of genderless until they, um, need to mate. When they become fertile they will present as either male or female. And in their lifetime they might be male at one point but female at another…"

Maybe he paused too long because Nigel interjected with a low rumble, "Mmhmm?"

"Yeah, so… I guess, when I first read the book it sort of, um, resonated with me. This idea of being both genders at different times. And, um… I guess it also… Well, I've sort of felt in the past that I should be one thing or the other, like when I was with Jocelyn I knew I had to be the man. And I… I tried to explain to her, that I didn't always feel like… that. She just dismissed it as another weird Grigg thing. Until she got funny about it. She… wasn't open to it. And maybe… Maybe that was for the best. Maybe I needed to be with a guy to explore this?"

Grigg paused for Nigel's reaction but there wasn't one, just another hum of acknowledgement, as though Nigel was just expecting him to get it all out. Just keep spilling his guts until he was done. Which, maybe was what he needed.

"I… um, I don't mean that I *needed* to be with a guy to feel feminine. It just… When I was with Jocelyn, when i was with any woman, I felt this pressure to conform to what was expected. to be the guy in a relationship. I'm not… not trans. I don't feel like I'm a woman, not all the time. I'm comfortable with my body most of the time, I just… Part of me, I'm not really sure how much but closer to fifty percent than not, is feminine. And I… it's something I am only starting to come to terms with but I guess I always felt like there was more to me and reading that book made me think about it. About gender and how I never fully felt one hundred percent the way I was supposed to, according to society or whatever. And then I met you…"

"Mmm, yeah…" Nigel's contribution didn't really mean anything, little more than a grunt of encouragement, but Grigg felt bolstered by it,

"I feel like I took advantage of you. It wasn't purposeful. Once we hooked up, it… I felt like I could be real with you, and you totally read me and… the way you talked to me, like you understood what I wanted. I'm not sure if you wanted-"

"Wait," Nigel interrupted him sternly, "Gorgeous, I've never done anything I didn't fucking want to. I just, like you said, I read the situation. There was something about the way you were responding so I pushed it, and you kept responding and it was fucking hot. Don't think

that was at all altruistic darling. At that point I was just wanting to get my dick wet," Nigel chuckled.

He stroked a hand over Grigg's cheek and Grigg realised he must have looked a little crestfallen.

"Darling, I look at it like this… You thinking you can't tell anyone this, was you being in the closet. Like, your gender is in the closet and I fucking know about being in a fucking closet. So I am all for you breaking out of it. Whether that means just acknowledging this side of yourself, or whether it means helping you connect to that part of yourself with what you wear or the things you do. The things *we* do. I am on board with it. Friends with benefits is still friends, right?"

He pulled Grigg to his chest, "You want me to fuck up anyone at work who looks at you sideways with this, then you let me know. And… you want me to fuck you and tell you what a tight pussy you have, I can do that too."

Grigg couldn't help the quiet whimper that came out on a shaky breath.

He had never expected to find this sort of support, much less in a casual hook up, and yet here was Nigel. His friend.

His friend with benefits.

Grigg pulled back enough to press his mouth to Nigel's, and pull the man's hand from his hip up to his chest.

"Mmm, such perfect tits," Nigel hummed the words against his lips before taking his mouth again.

Grigg shivered and moaned.

*

The weekend was over too fucking soon, and Sunday night felt like it was moving way too fast. Several times Grigg protested that he should leave but never actually made a move to go.

It was gone ten in the evening, after only leaving the bed for food and showers, that Grigg finally pulled himself out of Nigel's arms with a groan as the movie they'd been watching ended.

"Okay, now I really need to go," Grigg grinned at him but Nigel could still see the hesitation there. He pretended not to, as much as he pretended that he wasn't at all bothered by his 'friend' leaving when he could have happily snuggled him for a another night in a row.

Nigel hummed his understanding, not trusting himself with words as he turned off the sci-fi thriller Grigg had chosen. He moved his attention to Grigg watching as he dressed and enjoying the way he delicately pulled his underwear back on, wondering what he might look like in panties.

Nigel found it so fucking odd. He'd never found women sexually attractive, but Grigg? He was sure he could have actual tits and Nigel would still be interested. As if to corroborate, his dick gave a little twitch. Maybe it was just because he was Grigg? Nigel tried to shake that thought, wouldn't do to get overly fond of his fuck buddy.

"You know… You could wear more feminine things to work, I'd look out for you if anyone hassled you about it," Nigel offered. "I mean… you could do that, you should-"

Grigg froze in his dressing and fixed Nigel with a hard look, cutting him off with snapped words, "Don't tell me what to… I… I had enough of being shaped and moulded by Jocelyn, please don't try and force me to-"

"Darling," Nigel started getting up from the bed, "I wasn't trying to force you into anything. I was just saying if you want to, you have my support…"

"No," Grigg shook his head, and raised a hand as though to ward Nigel off. "This is… this is something personal Nigel, I need to take it at my own pace," the tone was soft but with a clear edge of exasperation.

Nigel wondered how many times things had happened with Jocelyn that Grigg hadn't stood up to, he was proud of him for doing so now, misguided as it was. "I didn't mean to… At your own pace, of course…"

"I think… Just back off, okay?" Grigg grabbed the rest of his clothes and left the room, A moment later Nigel heard the front door open and close firmly. He had no idea whether Grigg wanted him to back off for now or forever.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Apologies and... sex.

Grigg knew he had over reacted. He hadn't wanted to leave Nigel's embrace, and he was emotionally raw from their shared stories. And, if he was honest, the message from his sister too - the opportunity it offered and how terrified he was to take it.

He knew Nigel had meant it with the best of intentions, and really it was nothing like how Jocelyn had treated him. But it had sparked something and it took Grigg until he got home and tossed and turned all night thinking about it, to put his finger on exactly what.

It was just the thought that there was any chance Nigel could behave the way Jocelyn had, terrified him. Not just because he didn't want a repeat of that but because he didn't want to lose Nigel, didn't want that to happen to them.

And so much of that was mixed up in his message from Kat, as much as he'd tried not to think about it.

They hadn't really talked much since the split with Jocelyn, he just hadn't been up to the stifling affection his sisters would have poured on him. So for the first time in years, he hadn't discussed his love life with them. He's not even sure what he would say about Nigel, how he would explain the man and what was, or wasn't, between them.

Now the message opened a whole can of worms. A reminder that they had all booked to go to a big Gala event with their parents, for the wedding anniversary. They'd booked the tickets a long while back to ensure they didn't sell out, back when he and Jocelyn had still been together. Kat's message was sweet, her usual careful self, as she asked what he wanted to do with Jocelyn's ticket. If he had someone else he wanted to bring and whether that was why she hadn't heard much from him in a while.

And damn her, she knew him so well. Of course she'd know he was avoiding her because he was seeing someone new. She probably guessed it was complicated, or else he didn't want to speak too soon on it after everything that happened with Jocelyn.

He knew he might not have overreacted with Nigel had it not been on his mind.

Grigg sat at work thinking it all over even though he was trying his best not to. He could sense Zeller moving around the office behind him, quietly getting on with his job like he was walking on eggshells. It had been the case all week, now Friday lunchtime was approaching and he hadn't talked to Nigel since the weekend.

It would be so easy to get up and go to Nigel's office, but he just wasn't sure how. This was meant to be casual and Grigg was making it into more and more drama for the man. He knew he couldn't be worth all of this to-

"Nigel!" Zeller's startled cry, startled Grigg in turn and he looked around to see Nigel at the door of the office.

"Hey gorgeous, can we talk?"

Grigg frowned, not sure what to say.

Zeller looked between them and then excused himself saying he was needed by the techies, before heading into the workshop.

"Nigel, I-"

"It's okay darling… I…" Nigel shut the door and walked over to Grigg's desk, putting a book down. One Grigg recognised. "See, I've been reading this and I think I get it. As much as I can anyway."

Grigg stared down at a newish looking copy of The Left Hand of Darkness.

"So… they kinda fall in love, huh?" Nigel said, "The Genly-Genry guy from Earth and that alien politician."

"Estraven," Grigg provided, a little gobsmacked by the turn of events.

It had taken Jocelyn realising that she wasn't going to get her way, before she read anything Grigg had recommended her. And here was Nigel, his casual fling, having spent the last few days reading a book Grigg mentioned to him without his reading it even being intended.

"Yeah, him… or they? That was cool. I liked that. I was sort of hoping they'd just give into it and sleep together, but it was nice they were in love." Nigel looked into the distance as he spoke thoughtfully.

He shook his head as if pulling back from a reverie, "Anyway, like I said… I think I have a better understanding of what you were saying. The Gethen thing… which, I hate calling it that gorgeous, it sounds fucking condescending. Sounds like something your ex must have said."

Grigg huffed a laugh at that, feeling like he was teetering on the edge of something quite euphoric.

"Obviously you can't physically change your gender, I mean… you don't change like they do. But on the inside you change. It's fluid, right?"

Nigel looked at him then, a sort of hopeful look, begging Grigg to affirm that he got it right. That he understood what it was Grigg had tried to tell him.

"Yes," The word came out breathless. "That's how I feel. How I am. Sometimes I'm…"

Nigel nodded, giving a gentle smile, “Sometimes you’re a boy, sometimes you’re a girl. But like… not just during *kemmer*.”

Nigel grinned then and Grigg laughed, not just amused by Nigel’s references to the book, but by the unlikelihood of all of this. He had never expected anyone to really take the time to understand something he was only just starting to really grasp about himself. And yet here was Nigel, copy of Le Guin in hand.

He let his laughter fade, studying Nigel seriously for a moment.

“You read the book. You read a book I told you about.”

Nigel frowned, “Of course I fucking did gorgeous. What kind of asshole wouldn’t do something a simple as read a book that someone they… someone they know identifies with?”

Grigg had an answer for that, but he didn’t want to invoke Jocelyn’s memory any more than he already had.

“That… that means a lot to me, Nigel. Thank you.” Grigg’s throat was tight.

“I’m sorry if I overstepped-” Nigel began, but Grigg shushed him and shook his head.

“I overreacted.”

Grigg reached out, hesitant at first, taking hold of Nigel’s shirt and slowly pulling him closer. He was biting his lower lip, a little nervous. It felt good that Nigel knew so much about this side of him - the only person that did really. But it also made him feel vulnerable.

Nigel hadn’t pulled away so far, but he owed Grigg nothing. It wasn’t like they were a couple, and this was a lot. Maybe too much? Especially after Grigg kept pushing him away.

Grigg whimpered as Nigel closed the distance between them and kissed him so softly Grigg wanted to melt.

In fact he practically was, sighing as he snaked his hands around Nigel’s neck and allowed him to continue the deep, slow kiss.

Grigg was breathless when he pulled back.

“We agreed, not-”

“Not at work,” Nigel nodded, breathing the words against Grigg’s neck before finally pulling back, running his hands through Grigg’s hair. “I know gorgeous. Dinner tonight? My place?”

Grigg smiled and nodded, not trusting himself to speak as Nigel gave him another light peck and then moved away. It was oh so tempting to ask him to stay and keep kissing him, maybe more. But he had to stick to his own boundaries.

*

Dinner was take out and half of it was left as Grigg and Nigel fell into bed together two hours into the evening.

After Grigg gave, what he told Nigel was an apology blowjob, Nigel returned the pleasure and they lay basking in the afterglow of their climaxes for a long while.

Nigel had no problem at all with lying there with the beautiful man in his arms, and as long as Grigg didn't object then he'd go right on doing so.

He snuggled tighter into Grigg and breathed in the scent of his skin - sweat and sex. Perfect.

He ran his fingers idly over Grigg's skin, enjoying the sounds it pulled from him.

Him?

"So, I don't want to be forward about this, and just… tell me if I'm asking stupid questions, because I don't want you to be uncomfortable. But should I be… Do you want to be called he? Or… I don't know…" Nigel shrugged and clenched his jaw, hoping he hadn't said something that might fuck everything up.

"I…" Grigg sounded nervous, and Nigel was sure he trembled a little under his fingers. "At work and… I don't think I'm ready to…"

"I'm just talking about us, gorgeous. It doesn't have to be beyond us, not until you're ready. And if you're not ready. Shit, I just… You tell me okay?"

He was warmed by Grigg's smile, "I'm okay as him right now, but thank you for… It was thoughtful of you. I think maybe sometimes I could be *she* with you. Just with you, for now."

"Of course darling, you just let me know. Is that okay?"

Grigg nodded, "Yeah… I…"

He damn near heard Grigg swallow.

"What's wrong?" Nigel moved to try and look at him, seeing that Grigg was blushing. He couldn't help a tweak of a smile on his lips, knowing that he was likely wanting to ask for something sexual. And Nigel was so fucking on board with that.

"I'd like to fuck you…" Grigg said in a rush, "And it's not… I just… I don't want things to get confusing. I'm feeling masculine right now but I also really want to fuck you and those two things aren't… I'd still want to fuck you if I was feeling feminine. I know it's complicated-"

"Not fucking complicated at all darling. I get it, being interested in a piece of ass is something beyond gender," Nigel chuckled and smoothed Grigg's curls back from his forehead. "And I'm very much okay with you topping me either way."

The breathy sigh of relief and arousal that Grigg let out was almost enough to make his heart beat out of his fucking chest.

*

“Fuck, gorgeous, there. Right there!”

Grigg whimpered as Nigel tightened around him for a moment. It took everything in him to stay on his knees behind the man and not drape himself over his back.

“It’s so… you feel so good…” Grigg gasped the words as he started to move again, slowly pushing in and pulling out, savouring the new and exquisite sensation.

“You do too darling, so very fucking good,” Nigel pushed back against him, taking more of him than Grigg had planned and he wondered if he wasn’t going as fast or hard as Nigel wanted.

He thrust deep and Nigel moaned, but as Grigg started to increase his pace Nigel’s hand shot back to Grigg’s thigh and held him there.

“We’ve got all the time in the world,” Nigel soothed, stroking his thigh before starting to slowly move.

Grigg bit his lower lip, heaving deep breaths as he stilled whilst Nigel moved. He set a slow rhythm that Grigg joined. And he couldn’t help his breath shuddering out, he couldn’t help shaking.

It felt so good. And Grigg was trying so hard to admit that part of the reason for that was because it was Nigel beneath him.

The few guys he’d fooled around with at college, had they ever gone this far, he knew it wouldn’t have been like this.

Grigg swallowed down the emotions that threatened to overwhelm him, and moved to cover Nigel’s back. Nigel grunted at the change in angle, but the pace remained the same as Grigg’s lips found his skin, kissing and sucking along his broad shoulders.

Nigel let out a pleased sound that made Grigg’s cock twitch and he had to still for a moment.

Nigel chuckled, causing Grigg to wince at the pressure that caused.

“Darling, you come anytime you need to,” He grunted as he moved onto his elbows. “Fuck knows I lasted all of about thirty seconds the first time I ever topped.”

Grigg pushed his reddening face into Nigel’s skin, as though he could hide the blush Nigel’s words caused.

Nigel had to have realised because he balanced precariously, reached back and stroked Grigg’s thigh again.

“I… I’m not doing very good at this.” Grigg said, clenching his jaw.

“Grigg,” The word came out as an admonishment and then Nigel pulled away.

Grigg gave a gasp and a wince and quickly grabbed the base of his cock to stop the condom remaining in Nigel as he moved up the bed and off of Grigg's cock. Grigg clenched his jaw again, feeling unimaginably awful.

But then Nigel turned, a quirked brow and gentle expression on his face. He reached his hand out and cupped Grigg's face.

"It's your first time. Can't you remember the first time you fucked a woman? Bet that was a mess. It always is. And this wasn't that. This was good, I really was having a good time in case that wasn't clear. But you've got in your head about this and I want you to not do that. Here…" Nigel guided Grigg down onto his back. "Let me take the lead and you don't need to worry about anything but coming so deep in me I'll be really fucking glad you're wearing a rubber."

Nigel grinned and Grigg attempted a smile but it was hard pressed. He could feel he was flagging and he wanted to fucking cry.

But then Nigel was kissing him, softly pressing their lips together before moving them to Grigg's neck as he began fondling Grigg's balls. Moment by moment the kissing grew more passionate until Grigg was definitely fully hard again.

Then Nigel broke away, moving so that he could straddle Grigg and guide him back inside as he sank down over narrow hips.

Grigg's breath hitched and his hands shot to Nigel's arms, gripping tight hold of him and he let out shaky breaths.

Nigel set the pace, steady and shallow, barely sinking half way down Grigg's dick at first. Even so the expression on his face made clear his enjoyment, as did the slight beading of sweat on his brow and his breathy sounds.

"You have such a nice cock darling," Nigel rumbled the words and Grigg bit his lip against the whimper he wanted to let out at the compliment. "So good feeling you inside me…"

At that Grigg did whimper and couldn't help but thrust upwards into Nigel.

Nigel let out a sharp cry of pleasure and sank the rest of the way down, grinding himself on Grigg a moment before leaning forward and taking his mouth. It was a desperate kiss and passionate kiss as they began to thrust against each other.

They were panting into each other's mouths as they worked themselves closer to climax. At some point Nigel's hands had ended up either side of Grigg's head and Grigg's arms snaked up around Nigel's neck.

Nigel grunted and pulled his face away as he rode Grigg harder and harder, Grigg barely able to match his thrusts. Nigel hung his head over him, face full of pleasure and exertion, eyes closed.

Until they weren't.

Until Nigel's eyes snapped open and he was looking at Grigg so intently Grigg's heart beat harder for a moment. They locked eyes, watching each other intently as they rut closer and closer.

It was so intense, more intense than any sex Grigg had ever had in his life. He couldn't deny the connection he felt to this man who had accepted who he was without question. More than that, was understanding, had gone out of his way to be understanding. More than anyone ever had in his life.

And this was just casual…

Nothing in Nigel's eyes said this was casual.

Grigg cried out as his orgasm erupted with a sudden force. His balls drawing up as he made a few stuttering thrusts into Nigel's tight heat, spilling over and over until the condom was almost uncomfortably full.

He felt enough movement to know that Nigel was jerking himself off. From the moment he made the realisation to the moment Nigel cried out with a growl and came all over Grigg's stomach, time had stilled. A hazy euphoria descending upon them as Nigel collapsed forward and they clung to each other wordlessly.

*

There had been a surprising lack of awkwardness after Grigg had fucked him.

The way they had practically gazed into each others eyes as they came, made Nigel wonder if it would be an issue. Certainly it had been the kind of intimate that they were trying to pretend totally wasn't happening.

Instead they had quietly cuddled until Nigel had excused himself to the bathroom.

When he returned he'd dropped down onto the bed, laying next to where Grigg sat, studying his phone.

"I have… Nigel, I have a favour to ask and… just feel free to say no. This is so… No, this is unfair of me to put you in this position," Grigg was rambling as he started to get up from the bed, placing his phone on the side. Nigel had no fucking clue what he was talking about, even so he grabbed around Grigg's waist, pulling him back into the bed.

He manhandled him until they were spooning and Nigel's half hard cock was slotted along the crack of his ass.

"Ask me," Nigel said, unsure what to expect. But if Grigg was this flustered it was likely something sexual. Maybe a secret kink he always wanted to try out? Nigel was wondering if there were many things he'd actually deny Grigg, so this might be an interesting test of that...

Grigg took a deep breath and let it out.

“Will you… come to a Gala event my family are all attending, and pretend to be my boyfriend?”

Of all the possibilities, Nigel certainly hadn’t been expecting that.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Nigel take Grigg shopping

Chapter Notes

CW: This chapter does feature a little dysphoria around shopping/clothing
NOTE ON CHARACTERS: In canon Grigg's dad is dead, but I just really wanted him to have both parents in this story, so I have magically revived him in this fic.

“I read this thing online,” Nigel said as he set the small box down in front of Grigg at the breakfast table. He had meant to give it to him the night before but they’d ended up going out to dinner. Grigg’s idea, which had surprised Nigel at first - this move into maybe dating. But then Grigg had explained that they should make sure they were comfortable around each other in social situations. Which made sense, other than the once they went for lunch they were either just sleeping together at Nigel’s, or ramping up sexual tension at work. Might be a good idea to make sure they were comfortable just being around each other without the sex, before spending the weekend with his family.

His entire fucking family, apparently, in some massive house they owned because they would not hear of their only son staying in a hotel when he could be in the bosom of his family.

The thought gave Nigel palpitations for a whole fucking variety of reasons.

The first thing he’d asked of course was if Grigg was fucking sure about doing this. It was one thing coming out to his parents as bi or whatever like this, but Nigel wasn't exactly the take home to the parents kinda guy. He looked like a fucking thug, and did Grigg really need that shit?

He knew Grigg wanted to come out to his parents, because at some point he wanted to ease them into the idea of there being a gender thing to address too. The way Grigg had explained it sort of made sense.

Sort of.

If he was going to come out to his parents by having a fake boyfriend it might as well be someone he’s actually fucking. But Nigel was sure that wasn’t really the whole reason. The unspoken reason, he was sure, was that he needed that support that Nigel offered - had been

offering him for weeks now. Grigg was going through some shit with all this and even if he didn't come out to his parents, he wanted someone there with him to not have to deal with that intense family dynamic for the whole weekend on his own. He wanted Nigel to be there to support him.

He wanted Nigel there.

Nigel tried not to let himself think about that. Maybe it was just because he was the best option and there was nothing more to it than that.

All in all it was a mind fuck, but one he had no interest in avoiding because he *wanted* to be there for Grigg. Whatever this was between them, Nigel wanted to support him.

He pushed the box next to Grigg's cereal bowl, and he looked up, mouth full of food and a questioning expression.

"What's this?" Grigg asked, a moment after swallowing down his food.

"I, uh… I read this thing, about visual cues or just… It might help with feeling more comfortable with yourself but would also be an indicator for anyone who knew…" He let the words run out. "Fuck, I sound like the website."

Grigg picked up the box and opened it, frowning as he looked between the contents and Nigel.

Nigel's jaw tightened and Grigg took out one of the leather bands, black with a thick dark blue stripe running the length of it. The other was a thinner band and had a more delicate swirling pattern in a light purple.

"When you're feeling masculine you can wear this one, and when-"

Before he could finish explaining the idea or his reasoning for choosing something as discreet as he could whilst, hopefully, not overtly masculine, Grigg was on his feet. He threw his hands around Nigel's neck and started kissing him.

"Thank you," Grigg pressed the words to Nigel's lips.

Nigel was starting to realise that he both loved and hated in equal measures, the way that Grigg reacted like no one else had ever been there for him in this way. He knew he was tight with his sisters, but that they didn't see each other often and whilst he'd gone to them for advice about girls since he'd first started puberty, he had been hesitant to discuss any of these things he was exploring with them. His sister Kat identified as bisexual, so he wasn't worried that any of his family would have issues with the situation. More that it would likely surprise them and… well Grigg had already mentioned he was worried about springing the not straight thing on them, much less anything to do with questioning his gender.

Grigg pulled back and shook his head, his eyes slightly wet as he was clearly overcome with emotion.

Nigel stroked his hands down Grigg's back, not able to help the goofy look on his face. Finally Grigg pulled back enough to pick up the box and place the masculine bracelet back in it and take out the feminine one. He slipped it daintily onto his wrist whilst Nigel let out a shuddering breath.

There was something intoxicating about being able to do this for Grigg.

Grigg was beaming at him for a long minute before he tempered it to a warm smile, "Still okay to go shopping today? I need something to wear to the Gala and so do you."

"What are you talking about darling? I have shirts, I'm sure I have a tie somewhere if we're talking that level of classy." Nigel rumbled and pulled Grigg back to him, he was sure it was obvious that he would rather get Grigg back to bed and keep him there all day.

Grigg chuckled, playfully pushing him away, "Nigel I've seen your closet.. You can't wear that damn sausage dog shirt."

"You just watch me gorgeous," Nigel joked back, nipping at Grigg's neck.

When Grigg went to protest again, Nigel kissed him. Rewarded with an annoyed huff - he knew Grigg hated it when he stopped conversations that way, but he just couldn't fuckng help how kissable Grigg was.

When he finally released Grigg he conceded, "Fine, we'll go shopping, but only if you let me eat you out first darling, so I have something nice to remember to dull the pain."

Grigg whimpered in response and renewed their kiss.

*

Nigel had really taken his time in taking Grigg apart with his mouth, delaying them for more than two hours. But Grigg couldn't be mad about it, especially not when he took into account the bracelets as well.

They were discreet and practical. Nigel hadn't needed to ask him what he wanted, or how he wanted it. He'd just noted which bracelet Grigg had slipped on and treated him accordingly.

He kept it on as he dressed in his briefs and trousers, putting on a looser fit t-shirt that had a slightly feminine feel to it. And Nigel was right, just that little visual cue to himself made Grigg clearly feel more comfortable about not being able to present totally as he might prefer.

In fact, he noticed Grigg visibly stiffen for a moment when they walked into the men's formalwear department.

Nigel put a hand to the small of his back and rubbed gently, trying to sooth him without words.

It surprised him for a moment when Grigg stiffened further, then he realised this was the first time they'd been anywhere so public as this. It wasn't like a discreet restaurant or the alley by a bar, or work where people knew enough of what was going on and didn't seem to have an issue.

Nigel was worried he'd misstepped. This hadn't occurred to him, but now it seemed obvious in the busy mall full of strangers who might judge with every glance. That was the last thing Grigg needed, Nigel knew. And it wasn't like they were a couple, so why make Grigg feel awkward over something that they weren't even invested in?

But then Grigg let out a soft sigh and relaxed against Nigel's hand and turned to smile at him.

Fuck, he had such a beautiful smile, it warmed Nigel all the way through.

They continued through the store and Nigel had to resist the urge to try and hold Grigg's hand. He wondered if they could talk about that some time? About the benefits part of the friends with benefits, being more than just in the bedroom. Like, what would be wrong with them holding hands and having other intimate things that weren't just about sex, but were still casual. No strings hand holding. No strings PDA?

"This one would look good on you," Grigg pulled a dark navy shirt from the rack and held it out in front of Nigel. It was plain and simple, a classic cut and not the usual white.

"Will I need a tie?" Nigel asked, unsure of what event even fucking was to be honest.

Grigg nodded, "Yeah, it's not black tie but it's still semi-formal."

Nigel returned the nod as though he had a fucking clue.

He must have looked as confused as he felt because Grigg smiled and placed a gentle hand on his arm, "Thank you for doing this, I know it's outside of your comfort zone."

Grigg's hand slid down Nigel's arm and his hand slipped into Nigel's, giving a gentle squeeze but then not pulling away.

Neither of them acknowledged this as they started towards the tie section, still holding hands.

*

"What's wrong, gorgeous?" Nigel leaned in close and Grigg couldn't help but shiver.

They'd stopped in a bar for lunch after shopping, sitting on the same side of the booth they shared. Shopping had been surprisingly okay. It clearly wasn't something he or Nigel particularly enjoyed. And... they'd spent much of holding hands, and being generally publicly acceptable levels of affectionate with each other.

He'd hesitated here and there, partly because being like that with a guy in public was something he'd never done before. And partly because this was meant to be casual and he didn't want Nigel to forget that.

It felt like he was reminding himself of that a lot lately. It really didn't feel casual… But he needed it to be. Casual was all he could do.

He really didn't want anything serious and he was sure Nigel didn't too, but it was nice to play at having something more than they did. To have those little perks of being someone without all the nonsense that came with it.

Without the emotional investment...

Nigel reached over and squeezed his hand.

"Oh, um… I was just…" Grigg pushed away the immediate thoughts and went back to what had sparked them. "I was thinking about what to wear… I'd kinda just… I have lots of shirts and ties I could choose from so I hadn't thought about it but…"

"You don't want to wear a shirt and tie," Nigel provided when Grigg floundered.

Grigg nodded and squeezed Nigel's hand back.

"What do you want to wear gorgeous?" Nigel asked softly.

Grigg shrugged, thinking about something his sister Kat had worn years ago to some black tie event.

"A… A midnight blue, floor-length, off the shoulder gown with a light wrap…" He shook his head, "Which I can't… for one thing it would be very overdressed," Grigg forced a chuckle to try and shrug it all off.

"You'd look fucking amazing…" Nigel sounded a little breathless as he pulled Grigg's hand to his lips and gently kissed the back of it.

Grigg smiled and shook his head, trying not to give into the temptation to pull his hand back as his cheeks coloured.

"Okay, but you could wear something else? Not a shirt and tie." Nigel encouraged, resting their hands back on the table.

Grigg wasn't sure how to respond. Maybe he could if he felt like it on the day, if he felt feminine and wanted express that. He wasn't even sure he wanted to wear shirts and ties when he felt masculine any more. A gender neutral middle ground, something androgynous, would be perfect, though he wasn't sure it existed. It certainly didn't in his current wardrobe.

"I suppose…" Grigg tried not to sound as disheartened as he felt. As much as he loved the idea of a evening gown, he just wished there was something he could wear, even during the day or for work, that felt more like himself - more like Grigg.

Nigel leaned in and kissed his cheek, nuzzling against his light stubble in a way that was more comfort than sexual.

“Shops are still open a few more hours, we can find something for you… For the Gala or work, or… just… whenever.”

“Maybe…” Grigg couldn’t help but sound disheartened. He’d never enjoyed shopping, and had always been rather perfunctory with clothes. Smart pants and a button down for work, cycling wear, and a whole drawer full of t-shirts with various movie or comic art on. Stuff that was easy. He owned the same pair of pants in all seven of the colours they came in.

Nigel must have realised because he pulled back and looked at Grigg with a frown.

“Grigg, I will find you something if it comes to that… believe me my mind, and hands,” he snaked his hand along Grigg’s thigh, “and mouth,” he leaned in and nuzzled by Grigg’s ear, “have all your measurements memorised.”

Grigg couldn’t help but whimper even as it brought a smile to his face. He sighed and pushed Nigel back to look at him seriously.

“I feel… self conscious about clothes, always have. I hate having to put any thought into it. And now I have to because years of just wearing the same thing and not having to think about it, isn’t enough. Those clothes aren’t enough now that I know why they never really were. But I just… I don’t want to pick something off the rack only to find it looks awful on me. I don’t… I don’t think I could take that.”

Nigel nodded, his hand on Grigg’s thigh now rubbing gently - little soothing circles.

“Okay darling, how about we go and find one thing? One outfit for the Gala and forget about the rest. That can happen another time when you’re up to it.” Nigel suggested. “If you have a hard time we’ll go, but maybe it’s worth trying just in case we can find something?”

Grigg let out a soft sigh. It was good logic and he did feel better knowing Nigel would be there next to him. If anyone looked over and remotely raised a brow at Grigg’s selections, Nigel would likely scare them off with a growl or a snarl. Like his own personal guard dog.

The thought warmed him. Knowing Nigel always had his back was exactly why he wanted to take him to the Gala.

If he was going to come out to his parents then that was the best way to do it. And the best person.

Nigel was the best person…

“Okay.” Grigg agreed, silencing the thoughts his brain was heading towards. “Let’s see if we can find anything.”

*

When they had talked about it over their lunch, Nigel had had to stop himself suggesting that Grigg get something for the bedroom. The idea of Grigg in lingerie was something that made him harder than he was sure it should. But the way tight lace hugged Grigg’s hard and nicely substantial cock…

And maybe that was something he could suggest at another time, but right then the important thing had been Grigg feeling comfortable at the Gala.

They had spent a couple more hours shopping. Grigg had been really stiff at first, clearly uncomfortable, but as they'd looked through a couple of more funky men's stores, and a few women's stores with no hassle, he eased a bit. He seemed less concerned that people were looking at him and judging him, and more concerned about the clothes themselves.

After finding nothing in the first three shops he looked about ready to cry. Nigel couldn't even begin to understand how hard this was on him. He had read something about social dysphoria and had to put it down to that, and it fucking sucked. A lot of it came down to Grigg feeling comfortable in himself, in how he presented himself. And in turn a lot of that came down to societal norms. Which were, quite frankly, fucked up.

Who gave a shit if a man wore a dress? Who gave a shit if that was because they were actually non-binary or genderfluid, or just gender non-conforming? What about kilts! The whole thing made Nigel fucking mad, so he'd been glad when they went into a vintage store on the off chance and Grigg's face lit up. There were a few things in there he looked at, and a handful he bought without trying on because he just didn't have it in him to try them on in public changing rooms.

And that was sure to account for how nervous Nigel felt when he knocked on Grigg's door to collect him for their trip.

He wondered what Grigg would be wearing. He hoped he was happy and had found something suitable amongst the armfull of clothes he'd left with.

But he was more than a little nervous about being at Grigg's place for the first time. It was a fucking nice neighbourhood. Sure, it was one of those mass built little townships that lacked a whole lot of personality, but it was clearly one full of respectable people who earned a good buck. Nigel didn't need to look in a mirror to know this wasn't his kinda neighbourhood.

It was just after Friday lunchtime so at least there weren't really any neighbours around, twitching their curtains.

As Nigel had a fairly reliable car, they decided to drive and make a trip of it. Mostly, he was sure, it was because Grigg was avoiding interacting with people, and especially strangers, given any chance. So no public transport was preferable.

When Grigg opened the door he was gone again, calling for Nigel to come in and wait as he ran up the stairs.

Nigel frowned but did as he was told, wandering around the house while he waited. It was large and kinda bland, like Grigg hadn't bothered to redecorate from the muted tones it had when he bought the place. But here and there, there were touches of Grigg, and the robots lined up along the top of the mantle warmed Nigel's heart, perhaps more than it should.

He reached up to hesitantly touch one when he heard that bang behind him.

Nigel turned to see Grigg had dropped a small case at his feet and was looking at Nigel nervously, waiting for judgement.

“Wow,” Nigel breathed the word, “You look gorgeous…”

And he fucking did. And not just because of the clothes, but the way he carried them, clearly comfortable in a way he often wasn’t, even whilst he self consciously waited for Nigel’s opinion.

The outfit seemed at once vintage but also modern in the way Grigg wore it, more androgynous than feminine - just the right mix. Just perfect for Grigg.

Fitted dark blue trousers that were high-waisted but not flared, smart shoes with little white ankle socks. The shirt was vintage - cream coloured with a tie at the waist where it was tucked into his pants, and opened wide at the top despite being collared - cut to reveal the throat and some of the upper chest in order to be paired with a scarf. Grigg wasn’t wearing a scarf, he had left the area bare and looked all the more delectable for it. Nigel couldn’t help but think a necklace would look perfect there. Perhaps he’d buy one sometime.

As it was he found himself crossing the room in long strides and immediately setting his lips to Grigg’s exposed throat.

“I don’t know if you should wear this, darling,” He muttered against Grigg’s flesh between nuzzling kisses, “I might not be able to keep me hands off you… or my mouth…”

Grigg shivered in his arms as he continued to press kisses over his trembling skin.

“Please tell me you’re not wearing this tomorrow night? I don’t want to do anything indecent in front of your entire family,” Nigel purred.

Grigg let out a chuckle and gave him a gentle shove so that he had to give some room.

“No… I… Shopping gave me ideas and I bought a few things online. I have-”

“Don’t ruin the surprise for me, gorgeous.” Nigel purred, his mouth watering in anticipation.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Totally fake not fake, fake relationship.

“Grigg, you look like you’ve joined a kibbutz,” His mother teased good naturedly, as she welcomed them on the doorstep of their massive fucking home “I suppose this is what happens when people move to California?”

“Hi mom,” Grigg replied with a smile, though Nigel could tell it was a little tight. Perhaps this kind of teasing was common between them, but Grigg really didn’t need attention pulled towards his clothing.

“You look wonderful sweetheart,’ She followed with, leaning in and kissing his cheek as she took hold of his hands and clasped them in hers. “Casual suits you.”

It felt like a scald, like perhaps Grigg - who would wear a blazer over a comic book t-shirt - was a little formal. Nigel couldn’t argue, and avoided the temptation to mention Grigg’s cycling shorts to the woman he hadn’t yet been introduced to.

As if she read his mind, her gaze fell upon him. Friendly but scrutinizing, not betraying any sign of concern and very little more than mild curiosity, likely as to who he was considering she was expecting Grigg to bring home some lovely young lady. Nigel made a mental note never to play poker with this woman.

“Oh, um…” Grigg stammered, momentarily forgetting that introductions had to happen, it seemed. “Nigel, this is my mother Nicole Harris. Mom, this is Nigel Ibanescu, my um…”

Grigg’s cheeks flushed with heat and he looked down, as though trying to find the words, and Nigel worried if he might have a fucking panic attack or something.

“Boyfriend,” Nigel interjeted, slipping his hand against Grigg’s and lacing their fingers together. “I’m his boyfriend. We’re boyfriends. Together.”

“Oh!” Mrs Harris’s tone was surprised but politely so. She didn’t recoil at least and it was definitely surprise rather than shock, which felt promising. She switched gear to a warm, and seemingly genuine, smile. “You boys had better come in and get settled.”

Nigel squeezed Grigg’s hand and they entered the house together.

*

Grigg wanted to muse that it could be worse, but his mother was the tip of the iceberg. And whilst he was sure none of them would have a problem with him dating men, they were rather inclined to baby him and see things as fads and phases he went through. It had taken years of massive success of his own tech company before his dad stopped referring to it as ‘dabbling with computers’.

He hoped, even if they did think this was a phase he was going through, that they were politic enough not to say so in front of Nigel.

“So, Grigg… you didn’t tell us you were seeing someone,” His mother noted as she set a tea tray in front of them in the ‘good room’. Her tone was totally friendly and there was nothing harsh in her words. Just curiosity, which Grigg could handle.

“Um, yeah. A few weeks,” He swallowed and looked over at Nigel who was helping himself to tea and sitting back in the chair. Making himself at home whilst Grigg was almost vibrating off the edge of his seat. “We work together.”

“Are you in Information Technology too?” Mrs Harris asked with polite and genuine interest.

“No ma’am, I’m the facilities manager for the building Grigg works in, we met when he had chair incident.” Nigel practically crooned the words and Grigg could see is mother was instantly - and not easily - charmed.

“Incident? Sounds intriguing…” She lead with a smile, leaning forward in her interest.

It was all Grigg could do not to gawk at the easy way Nigel had with people. Had he never noticed before how charming the man was? Well, Grigg found him charming, but not like this! He found him charming in a gruff ‘I want to fuck you gorgeous’ way. Not in a ‘old ladies love me’ way.

Well, he really hadn’t interacted with Nigel much outside or work or the bedroom…

Before they could continue charming each other, there was the sound of the front door opening and his mom called out, “In the good room John,” to his dad.

Grigg braced himself.

He had always been very close with his dad, and although he’d never had an issue with queer people and hadn’t batted an eye the first time Kat brought a girlfriend home, she didn’t have the same closeness they had. He didn’t want this to change anything between them.

His dad appeared in the doorway as he was shrugging out of his pristine mack.

“Darling, this is Nigel. Grigg’s boyfriend.” She said it in a tone Grigg knew well meant that she greatly approved of the person she was referring to and for dad to feel the same.

Grigg looked at his dad, trying to hide his fearful expression and suddenly feeling like a twelve year old again waiting for his dad to come and chat with him after the maid found porn under his bed.

His dad looked at him and then Nigel and back again. Doing so in what felt like a fraction of second, before he broke to a warm smile and stepped into the room, reaching a hand toward Nigel to shake.

“Good to meet you Nigel, glad to see Grigg dragging someone along to one of these things. Hopefully he’ll find it a little less boring with company present,” John Harris said as Nigel stood and they shook hands firmly before they both took seats.

“John,” Nicole scalded, “If we were any sort of parents we wouldn’t force Grigg to come at all,” Then she turned to him and using a mock scalding tone continued, “But if we didn’t I’m sure we’d never see him.”

Grigg scoffed, “That’s because I know the girls will be here too. Safety in numbers!”

His parents chuckled and his dad shook his head fondly.

*

Nigel had no idea what they might say in private, but to his face Grigg’s parents were two of the nicest people he’d ever met. He knew Grigg’s sister Kat was bi, but even so he was pleasantly surprised that Grigg bringing home a boyfriend didn’t seem to phase them at all.

Grigg on the other hand? Well, he’d been fine, totally relaxed into the warm family atmosphere that made them both welcome, until his mother had told them to go ahead and take their things up to Grigg’s old room.

When they got up there Grigg let out a heavy sigh, shutting the door as Nigel placed their bags on the bed. He stayed leaning against the door, talking at it rather than turning to Nigel.

“Sharing a bed is going to be weird,” Grigg turned then, worrying his lower lip with his teeth, clearly having thought - for the sake of some sort of Victorian propriety - that they would have separate rooms.

“Darling, you’re in my bed almost every weekend. In fact I can’t remember a recent weekend when you weren’t.” Nigel nuzzled the last against Grigg’s cheek.

Grigg shook his head, “But… we… I don’t want to have sex in my parent’s house.”

Nigel pulled back and looked at him, “You think I’m not capable of sharing a bed with you without come being involved?”

Grigg shrugged and his cheek’s coloured.

Nigel clenched his jaw. He strangely found himself wanting to yell at the man. Tying to ignore that this was likely frustration over the reminder that he was actually just a fuck buddy doing a favour. How could he not know that Nigel would be happy just to lay there in each other’s arms? A slow and tender kiss goodnight before curling around each other?

He shook it off and instead replied in a jokey tone, “It’ll be fucking hard darling, but I will manage.”

He gave Grigg an affectionate smile and took Grigg's hand, squeezing it in reassurance, pleased when Grigg relaxed and returned the smile. Reminding himself he was here as moral support.

*

Kat and her wife arrived whilst they were having dinner, they had delayed a little for her but when she'd called to say they were stuck in traffic, she'd insisted they not wait on them. Grigg knew her consideration was more for the personal chef her parents had on staff.

And he had to admit he was sort of happy with their delay.

Arriving during dinner meant that she couldn't corner him and try to weedle information out of him about Nigel. No, she'd join them at the dinner table and be polite, at most a raised eyebrow he was sure. He would at least have a little time before she started to question him, no doubt she'd pass the information directly onto their other sisters too.

At least they were all way too polite to make a fuss of the situation at the Gala.

Grigg was suddenly realising he hadn't thought this through as deeply as he thought he had. He'd only been thinking about how bringing Nigel would help him break the idea of his being in any way queer to his family. He hadn't considered how many of those people would actively pry into the whole thing in the politest way they possibly could.

They were just starting on the main course when Kat and Reba arrived, calling out their greetings and dropping bags at the door before wandering through to the dining room.

At least it looked less intimidatingly large with more people in it. Grigg had never quite been used to his family's wealth, despite having grown up with it. His parents had done a great job of keeping all their feet on the ground, but it felt all the more daunting bringing someone into it who might not have experienced the same level of luxury. Which he was sure Nigel hadn't.

However, Grigg was sure Kat and Nigel would like each other. She was solid and down to earth. She didn't take shit and Nigel would appreciate that.

Kat immediately paused when they entered the dining room, giving a clearly involuntary smirk as she looked between Grigg and his guest. Oh, she had clocked this immediately. She walked over and gave Grigg a little half hug where he was seated, before she and Reba took their seats.

"It's been too long Grigg… But I guess you've been busy."

Grigg reddened slightly and didn't miss Nigel's little smirk as Kat pulled away and took her seat, leaning in close to whisper something to Reba.

"Glad you arrived safely my dears," Grigg's mom greeted them with a warm smile whilst they settled at the table. "Kat, Reba, this is Nigel, Grigg's friend." Perhaps she realised how that sounded because then she corrected herself to "boyfriend," and Grigg blushed hard.

His face was so hot it was almost uncomfortable. But that was the only thing that was. Grigg had assumed that this weekend would be super awkward - hearing over and over Nigel referred to his boyfriend, much less them having to keep up the public pretense. He had no doubt they could do it, more that he expected to be cringing inwardly much of the time,especially with introductions and… that just wasn't the case.

Kat and Reba had plates set in front of them and there was a repeat of some of the polite conversation his parents had already had - asking about Nigel, how they met etc. And Nigel was pleasant and charming, he asked questions back and seemed genuinely interested. He was also unphased by Reba being blind which, whilst Grigg hadn't expected him to be weird about it, some people unexpectedly were. It gave Grigg a deeper fondness for Nigel and a warmth knowing he was the good man Grigg knew him to be.

It wasn't until much later, when they were being served coffee, that Kat cleared her throat and asked, "So… Are we going to address the elephant in the room?"

Everyone went completely silent and Grigg's blood chilled. If anyone could see through the charade and realise that he and Nigel weren't really together, it would be Kat.

Nigel quirked a brow, his expression otherwise flat and yet Grigg could practically feel him tense up.

"I mean… I don't really want to bring it up, maybe it's inappropriate but… Grigg, I can't tell you have relieved I am that you and Jocelyn aren't together anymore. She was a bitch and I wish I'd done more to discourage her when I first met her. There, I said it."

Grigg's jaw dropped. He hadn't expected that. Kat had met Jocelyn right before they got together, in fact maybe that had been what had prompted Jocelyn to realise Grigg wouldn't wait around forever. Kat had said she wanted to meet her, talk to her, but then hadn't really commented to Grigg about it after. He assumed that it had gone well? Jocelyn had come to his place not long after and that was how they got together.

Before Grigg had chance to respond - or even close his mouth - his mom joined in.

"Oh my, yes. She was… I'm sorry to say this Grigg, but the few times we met her she… didn't impress."

Nigel poorly stifled a bark of laughter that had Grigg staring at him.

Kat actually looked… pained, and Grigg felt terrible. Her tone had been slightly jovial but Grigg knew her well enough to understand she was truly airing her dislike of the woman, and apparently her own guilt in not trying to act in someway on her concern over it. And his mother hadn't even tried to hide her disdain which clearly had Kat now fretting at the misjudged timing of this quip.

Perhaps sensing the rising tension, Nigel cleared his throat and leaned forward, conspiratorially.

“I’m going to be honest and what I’ve heard about the woman paints her as a class A bitch. But I can’t be mad, after all she did one thing right…” Nigel had everyone’s rapt attention. He turned and smiled softly at Grigg, taking his hand and linking their fingers before raising it to his mouth to gently kiss the back of Grigg’s hand.

“If she hadn’t been so foolish to break up with Grigg then I would never have had a chance,” He was speaking directly Grigg and Grigg was entirely caught in his gaze, his heart thumping and a shiver running over his skin. “Her loss has been my gain.”

Kat let out an ‘aww’ sound that snapped Grigg from his focus on Nigel’s gently smiling face. He looked around and saw that everyone looked like their hearts had melted, even his dad who had a slight wetness to his eyes.

It warmed Grigg for a split second. For as long as it took him to remember that none of this was real. Nigel was just doing a great job of carrying out the favour he’d asked of him. So he couldn’t be mad.

And yet part of him wanted to be. He wanted to be angry at Nigel for… something. Leading him on? No, that was ridiculous. Nigel was only doing as asked and it was Grigg who was constantly laying down boundaries. Nigel might even be interested in something more than the casual thing they had if…

Grigg pulled his hand back and placed it in his lap, shuddering a little.

“I- I’m tired. It’s been a long day.”

Nigel looked a little concerned and placed his arm across the back of Grigg’s chair, a subtle comfort whilst trying not to be intrusive. The sort of thoughtful thing that Nigel always did. Grigg let out a soft sigh and relaxed back against his arm, selfishly not able to resist the comfort offered, as usual.

“You boys go,” His mom smiled fondly at them. “Get your beauty sleep for tomorrow.”

Nigel was out of his chair before she’d even finished speaking, and then was gently ushering Grigg to his feet as they all bid a warm good night.

*

“Are you alright gorgeous?” Nigel asked as Grigg returned from the ensuite.

He’d freshened up and changed into some full on flannels whilst in there, as though he really did believe Nigel wouldn’t be able to keep his hands to himself.

As though trying to make a point, Nigel pulled back the covers revealing his spaceship covered boxer shorts - he’d already made a note to get robot ones soon - and wiggled his eyebrows.

Grigg’s stoic face broke into a smile he was unable to stop and he let out a light chuckle.

“Come on darling, this is going well. Amazingly well some might say!”

Grigg's smile faltered but even so he crawled into the bed, snuggling up to Nigel and letting himself be wrapped up by the man.

It was going well. So well, his family had no clue that it wasn't real. Nigel started to wonder if, for Grigg, that was the problem. Sure, it had been his idea, but perhaps lying to his family wasn't sitting right with Grigg.

At least they only needed to get through the next day.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Nigel is the best fake boyfriend ever.

“Grigg, sweetheart, you own your own business, surely you can take a week, or an extra few days at least? Then tomorrow we can all take a picnic out to the lake, and...”

Nigel could hear Grigg’s mom as he walked down the stairs.

He’d woken to find Grigg gone and guessed that maybe he needed some space. This wasn’t like when they just hung out at his place, naked all day. Grigg had clearly already been uncomfortable the night before about this whole situation, so Nigel took a shower and got himself ready for the day before heading downstairs to find him.

“Mom, I can’t just…” Grigg let out a heavy sigh. “Besides, Nigel has work too. We can’t just drop everything and-”

“Grigg. Kat and Reba are staying until Monday. Your father and I have barely seen you since the last time you visited with Jocelyn and… We’re worried about you. We miss you.”

Nigel stilled outside the door to the parlour where he could hear the voices coming from.

“I… I’m doing okay. Thanks to Nigel…” Grigg’s voice was barely above a whisper.

“He seems like a very charming man and he obviously cares for you a great deal.” Mrs Harris replied, a fond note in her tone.

“He’s… Actually mom he’s…”

Nigel could hear the distress in Grigg’s tone. It sounded like he was about to out the charade, and whilst Nigel wanted to support him in anything he did, he knew that would be a fucking mistake all around. If he came clean then the rest of the trip would be fucking awkward, or the Gala wouldn’t even happen at all. Which wasn’t fair on Grigg’s parents for their anniversary, and knew Grigg would hate himself for it after.

It would also open a whole can of worms. If he came clean about this then he might feel the need to explain more than he was ready to about everything that was going on with him. Which would leave him feeling like shit. Or equally he might not say anything and that would no doubt leave him feeling like shit too.

There was no way in which Grigg could explain the situation without it becoming a much *bigger* situation that he was sure Grigg wasn’t prepared to deal with right now. He would ask,

when they were alone and if Grigg really wanted to, he'd support him. But right now he wanted to make sure that Grigg didn't do anything in the heat off the moment.

Nigel strolled casually into the room, "a snorer," he completed, "Sorry darling."

Grigg's eyes went wide and he reddened, looking guilty, as though he'd been caught out. Nigel gave him the fondest look he could, hoping it conveyed as he moved next to his would-be boyfriend and slipped an arm around his waist.

Mrs Harris smiled and let out a light chuckle, "I can sympathise completely."

"Actually, mom was asking, um, for us to stay longer," Grigg's words were hesitant and a little pained.

Nigel frowned thoughtfully, he wanted to help with this situation without coming down on either side of it. "I could probably swing an extra day, but after that I'd need to get back. Someone needs to be there to change the busted light bulbs," He joked.

"Hush," Mrs Harris admonished, "I'm sure the place can barely run without you." It was polite, but also didn't sound like bullshit so Nigel took it as the intended compliment that it was. "An extra day would be lovely," she smiled, a happy compromise reached.

She told them to come through for breakfast before she wandered out of the room with more fond smiles. Grigg stopped Nigel as he started to try and follow, and Nigel steeled himself for a telling off.

"Thank you," Grigg said quietly. "I…"

Nigel pulled Grigg into his arms and pressed his lips softly to his forehead, "For staying?"

Grigg nodded and pulled back to look at him, "And for… stopping me. I guess you heard what we were talking about?"

Nigel nodded but remained quiet, allowing Grigg to fill the space.

"I nearly… I was going to tell mom the truth about…" He gave Nigel an imploring look and Nigel pulled him close again.

"I know gorgeous, and you can do that if you want. I will support you either way. I know… I know you feel like you're misleading them, and this is difficult for you."

Grigg sighed against Nigel's chest and he wanted nothing more than to keep him there forever if he could.

"No, I was just… yeah it's difficult and I… I want to be able to talk to my family, but… you were right to stop me, I'm not ready yet for the bigger conversation." He signed again and Nigel gave him a squeeze.

*

Grigg lost himself to the day.

His other sister and her husband arrived and were introduced to Nigel, giving him the once over with raised brows and smirks and clear looks to Kat, telegraphing *we'll talk about this later*! And then before they knew it a light buffet was laid on to sustain them whilst the prepared for the Gala.

Nigel looked completely amused by the whole thing, as everyone began running around trying to find this or that. His mom calling for the housekeeper every few minutes. Grigg was mildly embarrassed by it really, hyper aware of how a privileged family like his might seem from the outside.

It was a madhouse, with his dad calm at the centre, already dressed and sitting quietly reading his paper in the study.

If there was ever a better exemplar of his family, Grigg wasn't sure he'd found it yet.

They'd stood around talking a while with his dad, then picked over some of the food and helped themselves to wine. Every now and then a sister would appear in a varied state of dress, or with hair in a towel, or in curlers. They had ended up standing in the main downstairs hallway, watching it all unfold as they talked quietly amongst themselves - Grigg answering questions about growing up in such a big house with a slightly eccentric family.

Grigg gladly told him and it warmed him through. He'd forgotten how much he used to enjoy these things. He'd always felt slightly alien to them at times - when he was very young and would be dressed up in a childish suit and left with his dad in the study. As he passed through his teenage years his sisters had started to include him. Asking his opinion, making him help choice clothing combinations. Sometimes they had him join in as they did their hair and makeup, putting a little eyeshadow and lip gloss on him for fun. Something light that was easily washed off the moment their mother came to chase them along and she tutted at them affectionately and made him wash his face.

He'd not felt bad about it at the time, he understood he wasn't meant to be wearing it and had to wash it off like a good little boy, but he had enjoyed the experience nonetheless.

Reflecting on it made him smile.

"Having fun gorgeous?" Nigel asked, grinning at him and raising a hand to brush his thumb over Grigg's lower lip.

Grigg enjoyed the gesture, wanted more of it. In fact, he enjoyed having Nigel there to share it all. Maybe he could just let himself enjoy it for a while?

He sucked his lower lip into his mouth as Nigel's hand cupped his face, heat rising on his cheeks.

"Yes… I'm… I was just remembering my sister's doing my makeup when I was younger. As a joke really, a bit of silly fun."

“You want to do that now darling? I’m here to support you if you do.” Nigel offered, his voice low and his expression serious.

Grigg shook his head but melted against Nigel all the same, leaning into the man’s frame until both arms came up around to hold him. “Not tonight, I appreciate the support though.”

“Anytime,” Nigel growled before pulling back enough to lean in and kiss Grigg. It was slow but with an unmistakable hunger that nearly had Grigg whimpering.

“Oh! Oops, sorry!” Kat’s voice broke them apart and Grigg damn near jumped a foot away from his fake boyfriend. “Sorry, I was just getting some more wine for me and Reba… Don’t… um, don’t stop on my account.”

Kat looked mischievous and amused, and that warmed Grigg too. It was all too easy to feel like this was real and to allow himself to do so too. He was sure Nigel wouldn’t mind, in fact wasn’t that the whole point? They were meant to be boyfriends.

Before Grigg could think more on it, Nigel’s hand slipped into his and he raised it to his mouth to press a kiss to the back, before turning to Kat.

“It’s probably best you stopped us. If we’d have kissed much longer… Well, I’m sure we don’t have enough time for me to take Grigg upstairs and-”

“Nigel!” Grigg slapped his free hand over Nigel’s mouth so hard that it made a fleshy smack of a sound.

Kat was wide eyed but amused, guffawing through her shock.

“Come on now!” The voice of Grigg’s mom drifted down the corridor, “What is all this playing. Kat, aren’t you ready yet? Grigg, you haven’t even started to get ready!” She caught up with her voice and gave them a stern enough look that they all immediately ran like naughty children.

*

Grigg was shaking like a leaf and Nigel couldn’t help but reach out for him.

“You look amazing,” he growled against Grigg’s ear as Nigel pulled him back against his chest, keeping eye contact in the full length mirror in their room. “So beautiful.”

Nigel felt Grigg shiver against him before tensing.

“Is it too much though?”

Grigg was wearing smart pants that were high waisted with a vintage feel, but were cut short at the ankle, paired with smart shoes but no socks. His top was tucked in, slim fitted and looking like a shirt, with a collar opened deep at the throat, but no buttons. Nigel resisted the urge to stroked his fingers down Grigg’s throat.

Instead he smiled softly and gave a slight shake of his head, “Darling, I won’t lie - you’re family might be surprised by the sudden change in style, but there’s nothing that screams *girly* if that’s what you’re worried about. If anything, it’s that sort of effeminate a lot of gay guys can carry off. I doubt they’ll bat an eye considering you’ve just brought a boyfriend home with you.”

Grigg’s smile seemed fairly forced, but he nodded and Nigel understood it was his nerves. Grigg was scared everyone would see who he really was and he wasn’t ready for that yet.

“You can wear something else if-” Nigel started, stroking his hands soothingly up and down Grigg’s bare arms.

“No,” Grigg cut him off with the quiet but forceful word.

Nigel nodded and smiled again, placing a kiss on Grigg’s shoulder.

“Darling, I’m going to make such a fuss over you tonight, people won’t care what you’re wearing, they’ll be too busy talking about how your boyfriend can’t keep his hands to himself for a minute.” Nigel pressed a nipping kiss against Grigg’s cheek and was delighted with the slightly more relaxed, responding tinkle of laughter.

Grigg turned in his arms and snaked his hands up around his neck.

And Nigel was thrilled. There was no escaping the fact.

He knew this was just pretend, even if it was marginally more than they were already were to each other. Fun, ecstasy, companionship, tenderness, intimacy, but still always casual. Just as Grigg wanted. And he was never going to fucking push, because Grigg had enough to deal with. But he wasn’t above taking advantage of it, and treating Grigg like his fucking boyfriend whilst he had the fucking chance.

*

“Oh my!” Grigg’s mom’s hand went to her mouth as she saw Nigel and Grigg coming down the stairs.

Nigel let out a chuckle, “Scrub up well don’t I? Bet you didn’t think I could even get a tie around my thick neck.”

Grigg almost laughed at the fondly exasperated look his mom shot Nigel.

“You look charming Nigel, but it was Grigg who stole my breath.”

Grigg held his own breath as he waited for her judgement.

“Very fetching sweetheart, and so much more stylish than your usual button downs. Nigel is clearly a good influence on you.”

She eyed Nigel with some humour, a joke there Grigg knew, because clearly Nigel - whilst scrubbing up well - still looked every inch who he was even in the monkey suit. Grigg

wouldn't be surprised if people at the Gala mistook him for security.

The thought made Grigg flutter. The thought of Nigel as his own personal security. It didn't feel that far from the truth.

"Holy shit!" Kat had rounded the corner and stopped in her tracks. She and Reba looked stunning, Kat in a very high quality pant suit and Reba in an understated cocktail dress.

"Katherine!" Grigg's mom admonished at the same time as Reba grabbed Kat's arm and asked -
"What is it?" Clearly not sure whether to be concerned or amused.

"Grigg is… he looks amazing." Kat told her wife, but her encouraging smile was for Grigg.

"Here," Grigg said, descending the last few steps until he was in front of Reba. He knew she liked to read things in a tactile way where possible, so he gently lifted her hand and placed it on his shoulder.

She felt the fabric for a moment, "Wow, this is nice. Feels fancy," She was grinning as she brought up her other hand to his other shoulder and then worked them inwards, feeling the collar with a raised brow, stopping short of making contact with his skin. "My my, Grigg. Not leaving a lot to the imagination are you?"

She let out a chuckle and Grigg felt his face burn, all the more when the others joined in the gentle laughter. All but Nigel, who was suddenly at his side, tugging Grigg against him.

"Now, that's enough of that. You've got your own Harris!" Nigel growled, though his playful jealousy was met with the humour he'd clearly intended.

Kat gave Grigg yet another approving look.

*

The most hilarious thing to Nigel, was that the Harris family didn't consider this fancy affair 'that fancy'. For them this sea of ties and cocktail dresses, expensive booze, five course meal, and what appeared to be half a damn orchestra playing on in the background, was just not 'that fancy'.

Back in Bucharest shit like this would have annoyed the fuck out of Nigel, both the event and the attitude. But when he moved to the States he'd made the decision to let shit go that wasn't important. He'd felt much better since he'd learned to relax with himself. Of course being out helped that a lot.

So now, old Nigel would be laughing at the fact that he found this sort of cute. The way Grigg blushed as his mom painted this to be quite a low key, informal event, was fucking adorable. Because whilst Grigg probably thought, comparatively, the same thing, he and his sisters were slightly more aware of the reality most people actually lived in. Well, at least the Gala proceeds were going to a children's charity. Nigel was sure that reassured them as much as it did him.

It was Reba that interjected as they had walked into the large country club the Gala was being held at, “Even I can see the look on Nigel’s face right now,” she joked before addressing him directly, knowing everyone could hear, “It takes some getting used to.”

She held out her hand expectantly and Nigel took it in his, gave it a squeeze and then for good measure kissed the back of it with a chuckle.

“Charmer,” She said, almost an admonishment.

They had been shown to their table, eaten the fairly light courses - which was good considering there were so many. The drinks were flowing and at some point Mr and Mrs Harris disappeared and next they spotted them they were on the now bustling dancefloor.

The sun was going down and, as though perfectly timed, the strung webs of delicate fairy lights glowed to life, making the place look like some sort of fairy tale ball.

And when Nigel looked at Grigg he was pleased with that comparison. Grigg looked ethereal. Only one person so far had commented on his choice of clothes and that had been some old family friend whose daughter’s a fashion designer and mentioned how current this look was on the cat walks these days and how Grigg should have gone into modelling instead of computers.

Grigg had suitably blushed and been gracious, Nigel had found his chest puffing out with pride as he was then introduced.

Grigg was glowing, clearly the most comfortable he’d been in a long while in public. He knew Grigg had to find a way to dress as himself every damn day, and Nigel would do all he could to ensure that. Because this feeling was so fucking good.

It had gone a lot better all round than expected. Nigel had definitely wondered how excepting ‘high society’ would be there. But he and Grigg, and Reba and Kat, were far from the only same sex couples at the party. It was even Grigg’s idea for them to dance.

It was more a shuffle than a dance. Nigel was a fairly athletic person over all, but he’d never had fucking chance to waltz before in his life. But it was nice, holding Grigg close and let their bodies just sway together.

Grigg’s parents were having a great time, and many friends were there offering their congratulations on their anniversary. Nigel couldn’t help but let himself fantasize what it would be like that to be with someone that many years. Perhaps his experience had been coloured by the whole thing with Gabi, but he’d assumed his life would just be perpetually hook ups until death. It was why he was so accommodating to Grigg’s desire to keep it all casual. Not that he didn’t want more, because he was finding more and more that he did, but that it had never been a goal in life so he wasn’t missing out of something, or so he’d thought.

He couldn’t help but wonder what it would be like to have that with Grigg. Celebrate that with this family, that had been so accepting of him.

“Grigg?” And older woman’s voice broke into his thoughts just before he saw Grigg enveloped into a big hug.

“Bernadette…. Hi…” Grigg’s words were friendly but cautious, putting Nigel instantly on guard.

The woman drew back and then waited politely and expectantly.

“Oh, this is Nigel… my… um, my boyfriend. Nigel, this is Bernadette from the book club.”

The reason for Grigg’s hesitation in saying their lie was instantly apparent. This was beyond family living miles and miles away, this was someone he knew from his life in California. Someone who knew Jocelyn. Nigel instantly bristled but tried to present a friendly smile as he held out a hand to shake hers.

“Oh, oh I see,” Bernadette smiled the words as she took Nigel’s hand and gave it a squeeze. “Wonderful.” She clasped her other hand over the top before letting go. She seemed genuinely cool and happy for Grigg, and Nigel noted Grigg relaxed at least a little.

“How did you meet?” Bernadette asked them. She seemed to be coming from a place of genuine interest rather than poking at them.

“At work,” Nigel replied, “I’m the facilities manager for the building where Grigg has his office. We met when he broke his office chair, he was flat on his back just waiting for my assistance.” Nigel growled the words with a grin and Bernadette gave a light chuckle in response.

“That’s one to tell the grandkids,” She joked sweetly and Nigel didn’t for one second miss Grigg’s blush. Poor, adorable Grigg.

She turned serious then and looked at Grigg with a rather mothering gaze, “We do miss you at book club, but I understand why you… I’m sorry how things… No, I will say it. I’m sorry for how Jocelyn treated you, and I’m sorry none of us said anything about her behaviour. You seem happy now and I want to say that’s the important thing, but I know it must have been difficult.”

“It’s not your fault Bernie, but… thank you.”

Nigel was relieved that Kat and Reba chose that moment to join them. Turned out Kat also knew Bernadette and the weird tension immediately lifted as old friends caught up with each other.

Nigel moved to Grigg and slipped an arm around his waist, finding that he needed the physical contact in that moment as much as he was sure Grigg did.

*

All in all, Grigg had had a surprisingly enjoyable evening. Of course the bubble created by his family and Nigel had helped with that. And that could not be more evident as the evening

neared closure and Grigg stood holding his and Nigel's drinks whilst Nigel had gone to the bathroom.

There was a small group gathered nearby and he wasn't listening to their conversation at first, but then he caught a couple of words that drew his focus.

"Did you see the Harris boy?"

"I thought he looked lovely, but all the same. I don't know why the gays need to try and stand out like that."

Grigg's stomach dropped.

"And that boyfriend?!"

"Isn't he a janitor, for heaven's sake?"

"No dear, Bernadette said Facilities Manager, for an office building." At least there was a slightly scalding tone.

Either way it had Grigg's stomach roiling and he wanted to turn and interrupt them and run away at the same time.

"Less a janitor, more a glorified handyman," Nigel's voice broke in and Grigg did turn then to see Nigel and Kat stood on the outside of the gossip circle, grinning it at them. "Sure I can't sell houses or fancy trinkets like some of you do. But I can build a solid fence with my own two hands, which will likely come in more handy after the apocalypse?"

Grigg nearly spat his drink out as he laughed, grinning uncontrollably as Kat caught his eye and gave him a thumbs up, mouthing that she definitely liked him.

"I…" Mrs Weizs stuttered, looking affronted as though Nigel had been rude, and even if he had, she'd started it. "Well, it's ridiculous to base one's worth in fantasy."

Nigel chuckled and nodded, "It's ridiculous to base one's worth in a job. I mean, I'm not saying there *will* be an apocalypse, I'm just saying if it does I will come in handy, and you'll be one of the first to be eaten when the food gets low."

Grigg was shaking uncontrollably with silent laughter, sure he was failing miserably at hiding his amusement behind his wine glass as the circle seemed to have expanded to include all three of them.

"How rude!" Mrs Weizs exclaimed.

"I couldn't agree more, apparently money can't buy manners," Was Nigel's level response before he took Grigg by the elbow and steered him away with Kat in tow.

*

Grigg seemed to be buzzing all the way back to the house. They all were one way or another, Grigg's parents just being the right side of hammered and everyone had had such a great time. But Grigg… it was like he was fluid under his skin, or maybe it was the crackle of electricity under there?

He had a glow about him and Nigel couldn't tear his eyes away even as he knew the others in the car were looking at him, the way Kat smirked at him and whispered in Reba's ear.

Nigel couldn't help but smile back.

Everyone was merry and a little askew as they made their way into the house, each finding their rooms, until Grigg collapsed onto their bed with a happy sigh.

Nigel dropped on top of him, burying his face in Grigg's neck and appreciating the light chuckle and another, contented, sigh.

"Thank you for tonight," Grigg all but whispered next to his ear.

"Thanks for what? I was just arm candy," He joked, pleased to receive another tinkle of laughter.

Grigg gave him a playful slap on his ass before snaking his arms up around him, caging him. Nigel let out a sigh of his own. He was sure he felt Grigg tense a little as a result.

"Just think of this as some bedroom roleplay. Tonight I'm roleplaying the part of your boyfriend, and he's just fucking thrilled and so proud of how brave you were to be yourself tonight. And, whilst he is respectful of your wishes to not fuck under your parent's roof, he hopes that doesn't preclude kissing and snuggling, because right now he just wants to fucking hold you and kiss you senseless."

Grigg seemed to have stopped breathing, so Nigel pulled back, his hands either side of Grigg's head to make sure he was in fact still alive. And he was. Looking up at him and studying his face so intently that it was hard to get any kind of read on how Grigg was feeling.

Then Grigg's hands were framing his face and pulling him down into a soft, deep kiss. Nigel wasn't sure he was ever going to breath again.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

It all gets a bit too much...

Grigg's mother had insisted that they have a relaxing day together now that they had the extra day to fit more in. In truth, Grigg was glad of the extra day, still buzzing from the night before to the point of feeling pretty exhausted, he was happy they didn't have to take the long drive back today but could wait until the next morning instead and leave the same time as Kat and Reba.

And, as much as he hated to admit it, he was loathe to quit this time as fake boyfriends. He'd been hesitant and resistant, but at the Gala and when they got home after, Grigg had allowed himself to enjoy it.

He still wanted to enjoy it but as the day went on, he couldn't help but have that ill-feeling descend again. He hated lying. He hated what this might be doing to Nigel. He hated how selfish he was being over the whole thing.

Everyone had spent the morning relaxing. Grigg and Nigel had joined Reba in the pool whilst Grigg's sisters caught up over morning coffees and brunch. And now they were all taking afternoon tea in the garden whilst deciding where they might be able to get a dinner reservation for all of them.

Grigg watched Nigel talking with Kat and Reba, laughing together and it made his heart ache.

Quite unexpectedly, Nigel slotted rather well with the entire family. He had known if Kat liked him then everyone would, and she seemed completely besotted. They talked so easily and Reba laughed at his jokes. The three of them looked so at home together sipping their tea, like Nigel really was part of the family.

The little teacup looked dainty and fragile in Nigel's large hand, but he held it with the same tender care that he treated Grigg. The mental comparison sent shivers up Grigg's spine.

As he quietly watched the interactions, it was hard not to imagine a future with Nigel. And not to want it. Not to want everything they'd had so far - the sex, the intimacy, the friendship, holding hands and family dinners. But he knew it would be unfair on Nigel. Grigg wasn't in a place where he could be serious with someone right now. Maybe he was still sort of of on the rebound from Jocelyn and there was all the gender stuff he was trying to get his head around. In short he was a mess, which he wasn't concerned about when this was just casual. But

something more serious? It would be so totally unfair to get together with someone whilst he was navigating it all, making it a part of their relationship in a way it shouldn't be.

He loved Nigel too much to drag him into the tangle of all of that.

Shit!

Grigg's stomach dropped at the internal admission. And it definitely was him just admitting it to himself rather than realising it. If he really thought about it, he was pretty sure he'd started to fall in love with Nigel from that first night they went home together and hadn't stopped at any point yet.

And it was all the more reason to not pursue anything serious, at least not until he was in a place where he felt he could and… Maybe Nigel wouldn't wait around for that, if he was even interested, but it was unfair to ask.

Grigg had already asked so much of him and, really, had taken advantage of his willingness. He wasn't blind to that and it was another thing that made all this so hard. He was using Nigel in a way he'd been used himself in the past, and he felt sick at himself for having become that person.

Grigg grit his teeth, thinking not for the first time about how much a year in a relationship with Jocelyn had damaged him. And maybe it wasn't all her fault? Sure, she really had ended up treating him as one of her pets - expecting him to just be what she wanted him to be and do as he was told. He'd gone along with it all because it was easier. Just as it had always been easier to ignore whatever this thing was inside him. This Gethen thing. That probably hadn't made him the easiest of people.

He knew from those experiences, there was still so much uncertainty within him, too much to have another person in the mix. Even here with his family and how accepting they had been of Nigel, of Kat and Reba, it wasn't the same as him being able to be himself. Whoever, whatever that was. And he needed to work through all of that alone.

Grigg suddenly felt self conscious of what he was wearing. Of his hair. His name. His maleness. He shuddered and felt the blood drain from his face, a deep feeling of not belonging in his own skin settled over him. It was happening increasingly these days.

"Darling?" Nigel's low rumble interrupted his thoughts as the man leaned into his space, "are you feeling okay?"

Grigg shook his head without thinking, glad to see that everyone but Nigel seemed to still be consumed with conversation.

"I… I'm just feeling a little drained, maybe I'll go lay down for a bit." Grigg replied in a small voice.

Nigel nodded and turned back to the group, "We're going to go freshen up before we start getting ready for tonight, please don't book anywhere too fancy!" He joked and there was a light chuckle from all but Kat, who was smirking. No doubt assuming they were going back

to the room for a little action and really that was a better assumption for her to make. Grigg wasn't prepared to say anything otherwise.

Nigel played it all out, pulling Grigg up to him and holding him close as they made their way back into the house. And Grigg needed the support, his body shaking a little with the discomfort and emotions. It had never been this bad before and he was glad to have Nigel to cling to, as selfish and angry as that made him feel.

"How are you so good at this?" Grigg asked as they went up the stairs, trying to sound more together than he was, "the subterfuge?"

Nigel chuckled, "Living life in a closet makes a good liar of you. I should go into espionage or some shit. Not that I wasn't glad to leave all of that behind."

The chuckle warmed Grigg even as the words cut him.

He hated being a liar. He hated this so much. It was one thing to have lied to himself for all these years, or at least so it felt, but lying to his family was so difficult when they had always been so close.

Nigel frowned at him, clearly sensing that Grigg was struggling with it all.

He opened the bedroom door, holding it open for Grigg and following him in. He let the door close as he pulled Grigg into his arms.

"Whatever is going on in that big brain of your gorgeous, it's okay. Talk to me."

Grigg frowned, trying to decide what more he could say, if anything.

"I… Can we have this one night? I know we've had this whole weekend and I've been so preoccupied with having to do this with my family, I haven't let myself enjoy it like you have. You've…" Grigg tried to find the words, say something that didn't sound like Nigel really was his boyfriend. "You've embraced this, almost like… for this weekend, we are really together and not just…"

Nigel's arms tightened around him and he could almost feel the words lodged in the man's chest.

It was a moment before Nigel finally responded, "I enjoy your company. And… we've gotten to know each other, *intimately*. It's not really that hard to just let myself go with this, but I understand why that's been difficult for you."

"You said last night, about roleplaying as my boyfriend. I… I think I want that. Just for tonight, I want to forget it isn't real. I'm…" Grigg let out a shuddering breath.

"I know, gorgeous," Nigel ran his hands up and down Grigg's back. "I know you feel like you're lying to them all but… It's only a little stretch of the truth. We're together all the time, we fuck like the world is going to end, and we get along. They don't need to know it's casual, that's between us."

Grigg found himself nodding despite his frown. Nigel was right, in the big scheme of things it wasn't that big a deal. It just felt like it was on top of everything else Grigg felt like he was hiding.

"Okay…" Grigg nodded, burying his face in Nigel's chest, "Just for today, it can be real."

*

Nigel wasn't going to pretend that this was easy. Pretending to be Grigg's boyfriend was probably the easiest thing he'd ever done. But seeing the pain it was causing Grigg was definitely up there with shit he never wanted to repeat.

But since their little cuddle nap in the afternoon, Grigg had seemed so much brighter. Much more tactile, and clearly more at ease. He was sure the family would just think Grigg had been more hesitant at first given that they were around his family together for the first time, given Grigg had just come out and all.

They'd held hands on their way into the restaurant - a place the Harris's liked that were able to accommodate their number at short notice. And when they took their seats, Grigg scooched his chair a little closer to Nigel's so they could practically cuddle up.

Nigel's chest ached almost as much as his face did from smiling as they all made themselves comfortable around the table and chatted easily. It was a nice. It was so good to see Grigg smile and tease with his sisters.

Grigg had opted to wear a pair of smart pants and a shirt, feminine like the other casual tops he'd brought. It was a pale yellow, so it looked almost white at the same time as feeling a little warmer. Grigg's mom had been right that it did look sort of Woodstock, but that really wasn't a bad thing. After all, hippy's didn't seem to care much for the gender norms they'd likely grown up with in the 50s and 60s.

But beside all this, Grigg looked gorgeous. It was so easy to lean against him and even sling an arm around the back of his chair despite how this hindered Nigel's ability to actually eat his food. This was Grigg when he was as free with himself as he could really be and Nigel couldn't get enough of it.

"You're beautiful," Nigel leaned in and whispered the words against Grigg's ear as he belly laughed at something Reba had said. Nigel was too mesmerised by his 'boyfriend' to pay much attention to what they were laughing at.

Nigel pulled back to see Grigg's cheeks redden in the most extreme blush Nigel had seen on him in a long while.

"Nigel!" He turned at Kat's chastising tone, but she was grinning like a cheshire cat. "No making my brother blush at the table. It's uncouth."

The disapproving look Mrs Harris shot Kat clearly was a reprimand for her pointing it out and Kat just giggled.

Nigel grinned.

“If you must know, I was actually just telling him how wonderful he looks tonight.” Nigel retorted.

There was a chorus of ‘ahhs’ from his sisters that made Grigg chuckle and shake his head.

And damn this was amazing! Being able to be this way and not worry that Grigg might get upset, that his sisters’ reaction might make him feel shitty about the whole thing again.

Nigel wished it could always be this way, and immediately tried to push the thought down. If Grigg was going to enjoy this one evening of make believe then he sure as shit was too!

“So how was it you guys met?” Reba asked, clearly practiced as diplomatically changing the subject.

Nigel went to respond but Grigg chuckled and began speaking first.

“My office chair collapsed. Whilst I was sat on it. I just kinda… ended up flat on my back at the floor staring at the ceiling and still sitting in the chair.”

There was laughter from around the table and Nigel’s chest swelled.

“One of my colleagues went and grabbed Nigel, so I could order a new chair-”

“And I took one look and was smitten,” Nigel half joked to a mixture of more ahhs and more chuckles. Grigg just looked at him though, a lopsided smile that spoke on some level of real affection.

Nigel was happy to bask in that for as long as Grigg would allow.

*

The evening had been wonderful and he spent a second night in a row snuggled up to Nigel, letting himself have the fantasy that this man really was his boyfriend.

But as the sun dawned and started to glow through the curtains, Grigg woke with the heavy realisation that today was the last day of this fiction. And really it had to be that way.

They showered and dressed in near silence before heading down for a subdued breakfast. Everyone seemed to be sad about parting, which at least made his sadness less obvious.

The mood seemed to get lower and lower until the time came for Kat and Reba to leave. They all plastered on smiles as Grigg and Nigel walked them out to the driveway.

"You have to come and stay with us, for Kat's birthday next month?" Reba suggested, hopefully.

Grigg felt the sour ball of bad feeling in his stomach lurch and twist.

"Yeah?" Nigel replied eagerly, his expression showing how happy he was to have been included by Grigg's family. So much so that Grigg had to wonder if he'd forgotten this was meant to be fake.

Grigg grit his teeth, feeling Kat and Reba's disappointment as he replied, "I… have a lot coming up at work. I'm not sure I could… I'll check but I don't think…"

Kat pulled on a smile and nodded, "Of course, just let us know. You're always welcome. Both of you."

Grigg smiled and leaned in to accept the hug she offered. Kat moved on to hug Nigel as Reba gave Grigg a squeeze and soon goodbyes were over and the women were getting into their car.

As they waved goodbye from the driveway, Nigel turned to Grigg, an expression somewhere between concern and annoyance. Grigg could sympathise.

"I was just being polite. I didn't mean anything by it and…" Nigel's tone steadily grew more annoyed. "This was your idea, I… And I've liked it Grigg. I've loved being your boyfriend this weekend."

"We should bring the car around," Grigg redirected and avoided, not even able to look at Nigel as his chest and throat tightened.

He felt as much as heard Nigel huff and walk off. He stood frozen to the spot for a moment, trying to not let out the deluge of emotions he was feeling.

"Mr Harris?" Grigg looked up and one of the staff stood with keys in hand, "Mr Ibanescu asked me to bring around the car, would you also like help with the bags?"

"Thank you, no." Grigg managed, along with a weak smile.

When he looked back to the house Nigel was bringing the bags out.

It was time for this to all come to an end.

*

Saying goodbye had been really fucking hard. Not just because he'd had a great time, but for the first time all weekend, Nigel was finding it hard to play the part of boyfriend whilst saying goodbye to Grigg's parents.

It made his jaw clench thinking of how Grigg was already rejecting him, already closing down this fake boyfriend thing before they had even left. He knew Grigg had been struggling with it, but he… Nigel shook his head.

He'd loved it. He couldn't even help but admit that to Grigg.

He understood why Grigg wanted to keep things casual and he wouldn't push, but it had been amazing. Not just spending time with some great people, but being there in that way for

Grigg. Holding hands and being romantic. And yeah, it wasn't like he held back on that sort of thing at his apartment when they spent the weekends cooped up together like a dirty fucking secret. But being able to do them openly and honestly, even if the actual relationship part of it was a shame, had been fucking amazing.

And now they sat in silence. A silence that had descended the moment they got in the car and had been going strong for over an hour. Nigel felt like he was going to bust something inside from the tension in the fucking car.

"Grigg, I'm sorry if I crossed any boundaries this weekend," Nigel finally ventured, hoping he'd hit upon the right thing. "I was just trying to be the boyfriend you asked me to be."

He had meant that to sound gentle, but it came out more of an accusation that he was sure would get Grigg's hackles up.

Instead Grigg was silent for a few more minutes before speaking quietly.

"I'm treating you like Jocelyn treated me and I can't stand it!"

"What? No, darling that's-"

Grigg turned in the seat to face him and Nigel stole a glance before setting his eyes back on the road. Grigg looked worn and pale. His eyes were red like he'd been crying for hours even through he hadn't.

"You've been amazing Nigel. Not just this weekend, where you were perfect and I can't thank you enough for that. But… but everything. Since the day we first met you've been amazing and I've been nothing but a… I've been despicable." The words broke into a sob.

Nigel slowed the car as he replied, "What the fuck? Grigg, you've-"

He could see Grigg shaking his head from the corner of his eye. "I've asked so much of you, and you've given me every single thing I've asked for. In ways I didn't even know I needed them. And it's not fair. I'm using you and I hate it. I need… I need some time on my own. To deal with all this and… I can't do that if we're still seeing each other. I can't keep sleeping with you, even just casually, it isn't healthy for either of us."

Nigel felt stunned into silence. It wasn't that he couldn't see the point, or even that these words were a surprise. He had just wanted so much for them to never be said. And maybe that made Grigg right? Maybe that made Grigg better than Jocelyn, who would have continued to treat Grigg like a doormat even if she'd recognised the behaviour. But Grigg couldn't do that to someone else, and that made Nigel love him all the more.

Fuck.

It was so hard to keep that word inside him. But there was no way he could do that to Grigg. He wasn't going to make this all the fucking worse by declaring the love he couldn't deny had been growing within him since the first fucking day they met.

So instead he grit his teeth and nodded.

“Okay, gorgeous,” He agreed, the words breaking with emotion. “But if you ever need a friend, I’m here for you, okay?”

Even as Grigg nodded, Nigel knew that this was the end of it all.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Eight Months Later...

Chapter Notes

NB: From this chapter onwards, Grigg refers to themself with they/them pronouns. Until they tell Nigel (not this chapter), Nigel still refers to Grigg as he/him as he isn't aware.

Eight Months Later

Grigg was glad that Bev had recommended the new coffee place to them, especially given they had just assumed it to be another soulless and generic sort of place, like the sandwich shop that had opened a few months earlier in the new leisure part of the business park. But this was pleasant. Homely.

The smell of the coffee the first time they'd entered was almost enough for them to love the place instantly. But what sealed it was the atmosphere - warm colours and solid wood furniture, it was wonderfully relaxing. A great place to come for a break when they needed to think away from their desk and get a coffee at the same time.

It was actually just what they needed, not only the coffee but the subtle touches around the place that made clear from the get go that it was queer friendly. Grigg hadn’t really considered how much they’d needed that until it was there. And now they came most days, enjoying a coffee, talking a little with the owners Salim and Ifrit who they’d become friendly with, and most of all feeling free to be themself.

They never felt any kind of judgement over the way they dressed, and the first time meeting Salim and Ifrit had been the first time they had really made a point of introducing themself with their pronouns, which were instantly respected. That went a long way. As did the approving glances at Grigg's outfits, which were increasingly more immaculately styled. Sometimes more masculine, sometimes more feminine but mostly androgynous, and always very Grigg.

Grigg smiled as Salim came over and cleared the table, it was mid afternoon, a quiet time when Grigg found they could be quite productive without the bustle of the techies in the office and with the coffeeshop fairly quiet.

“Any plans for the weekend, Gigi?” Salim asked, “Have you seen they’re showing Mulholland Drive at The Empire, Ifrit and I are thinking of going Saturday night.”

Grigg smiled and shook their head, "New contract I'm trying to wrestle under control, the tech support is a mess. I'll be at it all weekend."

Salim nodded sympathetically, "Well if you change your mind…"

Grigg nodded and smiled, starting to pack their things up as Salim headed back to the counter.

And that's when they saw Nigel.

Grigg's chest went tight and a lump of anxiety swelled in their throat.

Surprisingly, they never really ran into him.

In the building they seemed to do a good job of avoiding each other, a brief nod of acknowledgement here or there if they happen to end up at a door or elevator together. But Grigg could count on one hand the times that had happened.

And it wasn't the same as running into him somewhere like this. Grigg was prepared for it in the office, and had just been grateful so far that they'd had no need to call on Nigel in a business capacity since the 'break up'.

He stood at the counter with his back to Grigg, looking up at the menu and perhaps hadn't seen Grigg given that Salim had been between their line of sight. Grigg continued to pack his laptop slowly, not sure whether to just get up and leave, or wait and see if Nigel left first. What did they do if Nigel turned to take a seat instead of grabbing a takeaway?

The frantic beating of Grigg's heart told them that they weren't prepared for the interaction that might present itself here. Not yet. At least at work Grigg was sure they could handle it, but here? Would Nigel feel compelled to say hello rather than the polite nod? Did they make conversation? With the professional boundaries removed would Nigel just snub them?

The immediate knowledge that they weren't prepared to talk with Nigel was accompanied by a sharp pain of nerves and excitement that spoke of how much Grigg *wanted* to talk to Nigel. How much Grigg missed him.

Grigg *wanted* to talk and laugh and collapse into each other as they did so. They wanted to be held and kissed and made love to in the way Nigel had, that made them feel so utterly worshipped.

It hadn't been an easy thing to give up but they knew that they'd had to. It was unfair on Nigel whilst Grigg was still trying to work so much out. As welcome as the support Nigel offered would have been, Grigg couldn't have that be the core of their relationship.

But now… Now?

Grigg didn't realise they were just sat there staring at Nigel's back until he ordered his drink, passed a few pleasant words with Salim and then turned.

Their eyes met and there was a flicker of something there on Nigel's face, as though he wanted to smile but wasn't sure he should. Grigg wondered if he felt the same internal turmoil that they did, that awful feeling of something being just out of reach. Something desperately dear.

They continued to gaze at each other, both unmoving, until Salim placed Nigel's drink on the counter.

Nigel accepted it with a grin and some more jovial words, before looking back to Grigg for just a moment. A long enough moment for Grigg to see the hesitation, before Nigel gave that professional curt nod and made his way back out of the shop. The bell above the door rang in his wake, echoing around Grigg’s brain.

Grigg sank back into their chair, not able to control the shudder that went through them.

They had wondered way too many times if Nigel would wait around, or even whether he'd still be interested if he were still single once Grigg was in a better place. But they knew it was too unfair to expect it, and even more unfair to ask it. In that moment of hesitation Grigg had hoped but...

"Gigi? You okay?" Salim asked, a concerned look on his face as he wandered back over.

Grigg forced on a smile, and gave a dismissive shake of their head.

"Just lost in my own thoughts," Grigg forced the words through the thickness in their throat.

"You work too hard, Gi." Salim scalded in a friendly way, and Grigg felt grateful for the friendship they'd developed the last few months. "Look, come with us to the Empire. Even if just for the movie? We're having dinner first and you'd be more than welcome. Just… don't think Bev hasn't been bitching at us about how hard you've been working."

There was a disapproving look there that likely meant that Bev had also told them the reason why Grigg was allowing work to consume them.

Grigg let out a heavy sigh. It had been all work since Nigel. They were busy, but in truth it shouldn't eat up the weekends, it was just easier to work than to think about what else they could be doing. Easier than to be consumed by thoughts of that time being spent with Nigel instead.

"Okay," Grigg reluctantly agreed, "Maybe I need to get out more. Just the movie though…"

Salim grinned, "Great! I'll let Ifrit know!"

*

Nigel almost crushed the coffee cup in his hand the moment he got outside, probably would have if Ifrit hadn't rounded the corner carrying a box of supplies for the coffee shop.

"Nigel, woah! You okay friend?" Ifrit's eyes darted between his own and his hand that held the cup he was about to destroy.

Nigel eased up and took a breath, not realising he'd stopped breathing.

He knew it was inevitable at some point that he'd run into Grigg in a more social situation, but he hadn't been prepared.

Hadn't been prepared to see or interact. Hadn't been fucking prepared for how gorgeous the man looked with fucking subtle eye makeup and the cutest fucking t-shirt and scarf combo. He managed to ignore all that shit at work, the few times they passed each other, because he'd been prepared for it. Though he'd made a fucking skill out of avoiding Grigg.

He just didn't want Grigg to have to face the bullshit of running into him every day when he was still trying to get his head together. Though he couldn't help but hope that one day Grigg would come and look for him, say he was ready and willing to try again if Nigel wanted to.

And fuck did Nigel want to. Whether something casual or, fake fucking boyfriends. Or more.

He had never been that fussed about relationships, not after Gabi, but Grigg had gotten under his skin. He'd fallen in love and because he loved Grigg, he'd had to let him go. And the hope that he might come back someday was killing him.

"Nigel?" Ifrit looked at him like he was a little nuts, and Nigel couldn't blame him.

He let out a slow breath and tried to ignore the cramp in his knuckles as he moved the coffee cup to his other hand.

"Yeah, I'm just fine. I just… Bad breakup." Nigel hated the words as soon he said them, but was at a loss to describe the situation without going into personal information that wasn't his to tell.

Ifrit nodded his understanding, "You need to get out. Salim and I are going to the movies Saturday night, come with us. We'll drink afterwards and-"

"You had me at drink," Nigel grinned, though truthfully he would have taken any opportunity to escape his own thoughts for a few hours. Cinema with friends, given that he never went to the clubs any more, sounded just about perfect.

*

Try as he might, Nigel couldn't get Grigg out of his head.

That wasn't exactly uncommon, even all these months later. But seeing him in the coffee shop had broken him in some strange way. Seeing him at work was something normal and routine, but outside of work it felt like an intrusion. He felt like shit about it and wondered if he should stop going to the coffee shop.

Which was insane because Salim's strongest grounds, that Nigel picked up on the way into work every morning, was what got him through the day. He had become friends with Salim

and Ifrit since they opened the place and he'd needed that. Some days he'd really needed those friendly faces.

Nigel let out a sigh and opened the door to the bar. Salim and Ifrit had said to meet there as he'd declined dinner with them and this place was right next to the movie theatre. He spotted his friends immediately, sat almost in the centre of the bar at a high table and stools. Their obvious happiness made Nigel ache.

He pulled on a smile when they spotted him, noting how Salim's face dropped a little and he leaned in to whisper something to Ifrit. Clearly he wasn't concealing his pain as well as he thought, though in his experience both these men were pretty perceptive.

They greeted him warmly and Salim hopped off his stool and picked up their empty glasses, "I'll get drinks," he said before heading off to the bar.

"Nigel, fate smiles upon you!" Ifrit grinned as he slapped Nigel's shoulder as soon as he was settled on a stool. "Salim has invited another of our friends, Gigi, and they are single. Perhaps a double date is just what you need!"

Nigel tried not to let the wince show, just tried to smile and seem appreciative even as he shook his head, "That's really, um, thoughtful Ifrit. But I… don't think I'm ready yet. And I'm also very gay."

Ifrit stared at him a moment before letting out a bellowing laugh and slapping his shoulder again.

"Gigi isn't a woman, they're genderfluid," He seemed thoughtful for a minute and eyed Nigel up and down as if evaluating him. "You know, I think you two would actually hit it off. You resonate with a similar energy."

Nigel quirked a brow about to refute that he was giving out any kind of energy, but Salim arrived, smiling his good natured smile.

"Gigi is going to meet us at the cinema. I think you'll really like them," Salim told Nigel before turning to Ifrit with a wide smile, "Don't you think they'd like each other? Same energy."

Ifrit beamed at Nigel.

*

Grigg played nervously with the band they were wearing. The *masculine* one Nigel had given them and they still wore, reflecting how they felt that day. It went well with the dark, high waisted slacks and pale blue, skin tight shirt Grigg was currently wearing.

They were glad at least of feeling confident in their clothing choice for the evening given that Salim had just messaged them to say a friend would be joining them too and that he hoped Gigi would hit it off with the friend. *Same energy*, though Grigg wasn't sure what that meant.

Salim had reassured that this had just ended up a coincidence, but it didn't make Grigg feel any less nervous about meeting someone. Especially as they had zero interest in meeting someone.

For a few months Grigg had tried to run with the idea of just not wanting to be with anyone because of the gender issues they were working through. But it was a lie.

It had been months since they hit rock bottom, since they dumped Nigel and took a couple of weeks alone time to essentially have a breakdown before turning to Kat. She had been the ultimate big sister, taken them in for those couple of weeks and given them a friendly ear as well as space and time as Grigg finally came out to her. She and Reba were amazing and in the end took Grigg shopping for clothes and make-up and they ended up with a practically all new androgynous wardrobe. It was the most comfortable they'd ever felt, and although there was still dysphoria and the anxiety that went with it, Grigg had a better sense of who they were and, for the most part, a renewed confidence.

It was a couple of months later that they'd changed pronouns, and considered changing name too, but Grigg felt like an okay fit, at least for now. They had reached a comfortable balance.

So really, it was a lie that they still weren't in a good place to meet someone. For sure, there was still a lot going on, but they were comfortable with who they were, even if it was hard some days to be that person. And maybe their confidence when it came to sex or relationships was still low, but it wasn't that either.

It was Nigel.

Jocelyn, Grigg had struggled to move on from because of the way things had gone with her, how she had treated them. But Nigel? Nigel had been damn near perfect. He'd been everything Grigg had asked him to be and more. He'd been everything Grigg had needed without the asking.

It had been remarkably easy to fall in love with Nigel Ibanescu.

Grigg wasn't going to be over him anytime soon and they weren't sure they wanted to be. Even if there was no chance with Nigel in the future, Grigg wasn't ready to move on.

Grigg let out another deep sigh as they turned onto the street where The Empire sat amongst bars and restaurants. They tried to shake the deep thoughts from their mind, wanting to enjoy the evening and appreciate Salim's kindness.

He saw Salim and Ifrit the moment he entered the theatre, a familiar form standing next to them, Grigg's mind not wanting to register it was actually Nigel until the man turned and his face dropped.

*

Nigel wasn't sure he'd ever felt such an immediate stab of emotional pain.

Of fucking course the person Salim and Ifrit were thinking about setting him up with was Grigg. Of course life would do that to him.

He wanted to turn and walk out, walk away from emotions that were too hard for him to want to deal with. But he didn't want Grigg to think it was personal. Because it wasn't. If he could walk right over and wrap Grigg up in his arms then he fucking would in a heartbeat.

Nigel pulled on a gentle smile that he hoped wasn't a grimace, as Grigg tentatively approached them, thankful that Salim then noticed Grigg and gave an enthusiastic welcome.

"Nigel, this is Gigi," Ifrit began the introductions but before he could continue Grigg interjected -

"Grigg, um. We work in the same building."

He wasn't sure if Ifrit or Salim noted the name correction, as they both seemed enthusiastic about the idea of Grigg and Nigel already being acquainted.

"Great!" Salim grinned, "There is at least one common ground for conversation." He chuckled and Nigel wanted to laugh at the thought that that was all they could have to discuss.

They all fell silent and Ifrit brandished the tickets before turning and expecting everyone to follow. Which they did. All the way through to the screen, where a little shuffle later, Grigg ended up seated next to Nigel.

*

The whole movie Nigel had wanted to reach over and touch Grigg.

It would have been so easy to slide his hand into Grigg’s, or to his thigh. Or pull him into an embrace as they watched together, and the temptation to do so meant that Nigel took in exactly none of the fucking movie.

Even so, he didn’t remotely consider saying no when Salim asked if they all wanted to go back to the bar to chat about the movie and get some more drinks.

And thus they ended up back at the bar and Nigel wondered if Salim and Ifrit were different kinds of muslim, because Salim didn’t touch alcohol but he was sure Ifrit could drink them all under the table. He had a lot of time to consider these things as the others chatted about the movie and he tried desperately hard not to openly stare at Grigg. Who was so fucking beautiful as he relaxed and laughed.

The moment Salim went to the bathroom, Ifrit disappeared to the bar for another pitcher of beer and a soft drink for Salim, leaving Nigel and Grigg in a hard silence that felt deafening after an hour of chatter.

"Gigi?" Nigel asked, clearing his throat and trying not to sound any kind of way about it.

Grigg blushed a little "Oh, it's… a pet name. Salim's friend that comes by the coffee shop, Sweeny, started calling me it. Says I look like a Gigi.... I kind of like it but it does make me feel about twelve years old."

Grigg let out a light, self deprecating chuckle and Nigel's heart clenched at the idea of someone having a pet name for Grigg. Someone who wasn't him.

"So you're uh… seeing this guy? Sweeny?" Nigel didn't mean to ask it and the words had come out with about as much chill as he could manage, which was not a lot.

Grigg's face heated all the more and he shook his head slightly, "No… I'm… I-I'm not seeing anyone."

Fucking music to Nigel's ears, as much as he knew it shouldn't be. He should leave Grigg the fuck alone. Grigg needed to make these moves if he was ready, and if he wanted to. And Nigel wasn't sure he could take being crushed if Grigg didn't want to.

They had been amazing together when they let themselves be. It just hadn't been the right time for Grigg and that was okay, he understood. And deep down he knew he had no issue waiting as long as it took for Grigg if he was still interested.

Nigel drained the remnants of flat beer in his glass, noticing Ifrit was on his way back and they would no longer be alone. It suddenly felt like the perfect opportunity.

"You want to get a drink sometime?" Nigel asked quickly.

Grigg blinked.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Someone's trying to hit on Grigg in the coffee shop...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Silence wasn’t a no.

Nigel kept reminding himself of that as the week wore on, with no sight or sound of Grigg.

It wasn’t like Nigel was trying to deliberately run into him, but he definitely wasn’t trying to avoid him as he had been in the past.

Saturday night Ifrit had returned to the table before Grigg had chance to answer, and Nigel had no idea what that answer might have been. Though as the days wore on, he had to assume that Grigg was avoiding him.

He'd seemed ok at the bar, he'd blushed a little as Ifrit returned but their friend didn't seem to notice. And the remaining couple of hours before they called it a night were pleasant.

Maybe Grigg had actually been hating every moment and couldn't wait to get away from the situation? And if that was how it was, Nigel knew he'd just have to accept it.

He pulled open the door to the coffee shop knowing they'd probably still be setting up for the day. He was usually one of the first customers there, especially on a Friday when the coffee seemed all the more necessary.

"Nigel, how are you?" Salim called out from behind the counter as he poured beans into the top of the coffee grinder.

"Good. Not caffeinated enough." Nigel grinned and Salim nodded with a chuckle.

Nigel placed his order and turned to look at the coffee shop, expecting to see Ifrit pulling the chairs off the tables to set them up for the day. He hadn't expected to see Grigg.

Who clearly hadn't expected to see him.

Grigg stood wide-eyed and beautiful just in front of the unisex bathroom at the back of the shop, that he must have just come out of.

"Oh, hey…" Nigel was sure he said the words but it was hard to hear over his suddenly thundering heart.

“Hi,” Grigg said quietly, fidgeting with the large bag he had on his shoulder.

They stood for a moment, neither moving, until Salim placed two cups on the counter top.

“Here you are.”

Nigel turned and he could feel Grigg walking slowly toward the counter until they were side by side.

Well, this wasn’t fucking awkward at all, Nigel grimaced.

“How was your trip?” Salim asked Grigg as they both hesitated to reach for their coffees.

“Oh, um. Fine. Busy.” Grigg replied and Nigel realised how tired he looked. Must have been a tough week.

“Did you get it all sorted?” Ifrit’s voice came from the kitchen and then he was behind the counter too, a warm and concerned look focused on Grigg.

Nigel felt the tight crush of jealousy in his chest. Salim and Ifrit clearly knew a lot about what was going on in Grigg’s life, and the fact that Nigel no longer did, pained him.

He desperately wanted to ask what was going on, unable to help but be concerned. He took in the frazzled appearance and heavy bag - Grigg must have been away. What if something had happened to one of Grigg’s family so he’d gone to see them? What if…

Nigel hated having to remind himself it was none of his business.

Grigg must have caught the concerned look though, because he frowned, as though worried what Nigel might be assuming, and spoke quickly -

“New client causing issues, I just got back on the red eye from a week trying to sort it out on the ground at their offices,” Grigg let out a sigh which indicated it hadn’t gone well, and certainly Nigel could see how that might all contribute to how run down Grigg looked.

And… Might also account for more?

Maybe Grigg hadn’t been in touch because he’d been busy. And his being out of town meant that he hadn’t been avoiding Nigel after all.

Nigel let out a shaky breath that brought with it some relief. Some hope.

Grigg was nervously biting at his lower lip as he played with the top of his takeaway cup.

“So, I should get to work. I need to try and fix things from this end. Brian has already been holding it all down for a week,” Grigg said softly, excusing himself.

As he turned to go Nigel's brain cranked and he grabbed his own cup so fast a little spilled out of the sipping hole and he winced as hot coffee hit his hand. Even so it didn't stop him from catching up to Grigg and opening the door for him.

"I'm walking that way too."

Grigg gave him a soft smile, "So you are."

*

Having Nigel walk next to them felt… odd.

A stark reminder that despite what he had come to mean to Grigg, and maybe even vice versa, they'd never really had this.

They'd had intimacy and sex, the kind of friendship that came with that, then the fake stuff with his family. They'd had support and tenderness, but they'd never had dating or even really spending much time together in public. Grigg wasn't sure how that would even work with Nigel and whether it was something worth trying. Maybe this had run its course and the time had been had, even if they had both been more invested in it than they should have been.

Grigg had to be realistic.

He took a sip of his coffee as they walked in silence, steeling himself before saying, "The other night. Um, what you asked… about going for a drink. I… I'm not sure."

Grigg had meant to say no, that they needed to be realistic that there was too much water under the bridge now. But as the words formed they became a maybe instead.

Nigel nodded, his own coffee held so tightly in his hand that it was clear how tense he was.

"It's okay. I know I don't have the right to expect or-"

"It's not… expectations. It's…" Grigg wasn't sure what their argument was now that they had to explain it. "It's dating. I'm not sure we're capable of dating."

Nigel was notably quiet for the rest of the walk to their building, opening the door for them both and letting Grigg go through first with the shouldered bag and hot coffee. The building was quiet, but for some of the overnight cleaning and security staff leaving.

Nigel had a thoughtful look on his face, clearly considering Grigg's words very deeply all the way to the elevator. They stopped there and Nigel pressed the call button despite his office being on this level.

"I think we could date," Nigel finally said. "I think we could start over and date. It doesn't have to be casual like before, but we already have a headstart on how well we know each other, how much we like each other." Nigel shrugged.

Grigg frowned and shook their head, despite wanting to agree completely. There was still just this niggling doubt about how that would even work. What they had before was so intense on

many levels. To do that again would likely burn them out.

“I’ll think about it.” Grigg hesitantly replied as the elevator arrived and the door opened.

“That’s all I can ask, gorgeous.” Nigel replied with a joyous grin that made Grigg’s heart do a little flip.

*

Grigg sat in the coffee shop, the same window seat they’d been at most of the afternoon. The weekend had brought no respite from the mess with the new clients and they’d ended up working much of it. They might as well have stayed in the office overnight. Which was why they needed the break now.

Brian was busy running all the other clients, Katz was trying to put together some sort of action plan based on their visit to the client. And all in all this client was going to end up costing them more than the contract was worth in all likelihood. Grigg felt bad. The company was struggling, and they knew they could help it, but already the costs were piling up.

The client had signed up for a set level of tech support, having completed all the evaluation information required. Only for the contract to start and problems to begin almost immediately. They hadn’t outright been misleading on their evaluation, they just had no one in their office with any IT know how. The level of support they would need just to get them up to a good standard of operations was way beyond the plan they’d signed up for. And they didn’t really have the money for anything more.

Grigg liked to think they did their bit for charitable causes, and helped out others when and where they could. But this was business, and even with the generous discount Grigg had worked out, there was still a chance of running this entire thing at a loss. The alternative was to end the contract.

Grigg sat nursing their coffee and looking out the window as they contemplated this.

They’d been sat there for hours trying to reconcile it all on paper, but it only came down to those two options.

They let out a heavy sigh.

“Penny for your thoughts?” Nigel’s warm voice broke into Grigg’s thoughts and they looked up to see the man stood next to the little table.

Grigg blinked, “Um… work is…”

“I’m sorry,” Nigel said, holding out his hand to shake, “It was rude of me to interrupt you. I’m Nigel, Nigel Ibanescu. May I?”

Nigel indicated the chair opposite Grigg with the unshaken hand. Grigg blinked again, a little bewildered, before nodding as Nigel began pulling out the chair and dropping into it.

“This is really… well, I know this will sound like a line, but honestly I don’t usually do shit like this,” Nigel let out a chuckle, “I just noticed you from across the room and said to myself I had to meet you.”

Grigg gave a little shake of their head, as though trying to rattle some sense.

They might have thought they were going a bit mad, had Nigel not then giving the slightest, imploring look. Grigg nearly missed it but the moment they saw it everything clicked.

Grigg’s heart skipped a little beat and their cheeks heated at the realisation. Nigel wasn’t going to wait, Nigel was going to take action. And that action was starting over. Literally.

“Grigg Harris,” Grigg held out his hand, “Um… some friends call me Gigi.”

Nigel’s face broke into the broadest grin and he squeezed Grigg’s hand before letting it go.

“Nice to meet you Gigi,” He just sat there gazing at Grigg for a moment and Grigg wanted to find that uncomfortable but instead just basked in it.

Nigel finally broke the loaded silence with clearing his throat and continuing, “I really didn't mean to interrupt you, if you’re busy-”

Grigg shook their head, “No, it’s fine. I could use the break. I… I run and own my own business in tech support. We’ve just taken on a slightly awkward client.” Grigg let out a sigh and closed the laptop, pointless as it was. “Trying to balance their account, whilst knowing it’s impossible or I would have already managed it.”

“Can you… shut the account?” Nigel asked with genuine interest.

“Cancel their contact? Yeah. I just… they’re a small company, they’re struggling and they don’t know IT one bit. Hence why they thought it would be cost effective to hire external techies. They won’t find anyone else that can work with their budget either, not with the mess their systems are in.”

“So what are the options?” Nigel quirked his head.

Grigg shrugged, “Cancel or run at a loss. Potentially it won’t always be at a loss, but we won’t ever recover this initial layout.”

“Can you… afford the loss?” Nigel asked tentatively. Grigg wasn’t sure if Nigel was referring to the business or Grigg, given that he knew the Harris family situation.

“I… Businesses can’t function if they run at a loss.” Grigg countered, defeat in their tone.

“Sure, but lots of companies do um, pro bono? Or… I don’t know, have a social outreach thing? What’s to stop you doing that?” Nigel asked, curiously. But there seemed more to it, more like he was reaching to give Grigg the solution he knew they needed.

All the same, Grigg frowned at the question. They'd been so intent on working out how to not have the account run at a loss that it didn't occur to them to just accept that it would.

"It's still not viable in the long run…"

"Of course, well. I mean, you could only really cut someone a break like this if you knew it wouldn't be forever. If you helped them out this year, would they be able to function on budget next year?"

Grigg thought it over for a moment. They'd already considered this. It was the initial outlay on new equipment and the support on that that would put them over. But once everything was running smoothly, then following years should be just fine on the contracted plan.

Grigg couldn't help the smile that spread across their face.

"I have this feeling you're the type of guy who likes to problem solve. Fix things."

Nigel chuckled, "Well, I am a handyman. I definitely spend a lot of time fixing things."

Grigg's smile widened and they were very sure that Nigel had stopped himself from adding some terrible innuendo on the end of that comment.

Grigg picked up the laptop bag and began putting everything back into it, considering that this solution seemed like the only one worth taking. As a result, they looked forward to the first good night's sleep in a couple of weeks.

"Um. Thanks Nigel. This really helped me out." Grigg meant every word. They'd been so fully supported by Nigel in a specific area of his life, that Nigel's general ability to be supportive and helpful may have been somewhat lost.

"You aren't leaving are you? I was hoping I could buy you a drink." Nigel didn't quite manage to keep the desperation from his voice.

"I should get back to my office and work all this out. But… I would like… Um," Grigg floundered unsure of how to do this. Whatever it was they were doing.

"Do you have a business card darling?" Nigel drawled, his voice low and intimate.

Grigg slipped one from the bag and slid it across the table, Nigel's hand coming up over theirs, gently stroking over the tops of their fingers before taking the card.

"I'll call you. We'll make a date," Nigel smiled and looked somewhat relieved that things had gone this way, as though he wasn't sure if this would have worked out.

Grigg closed his bag and then looked up, thoughtful and earnest.

"I… I should tell you. I identify as genderfluid. I prefer to mostly present in an androgynous way, but sometimes I do feel more masculine or more feminine," they couldn't help but play with the little *feminine* wristband Nigel had given them, nor fail to note the way it drew Nigel's eyes and the way his chest seemed to swell. "I use they, them pronouns and… I'm

comfortable with it all, but still growing in my skin. Sometimes I'm not comfortable with things, I have boundaries. If we… If I date someone, they need to know all that."

Grigg stopped and Nigel inclined his head, expression serious.

"I see. Well, I have to say, none of that bothers me so far. And I'm sure you're worth any adjustments along the way."

Grigg blushed, breath quickening a little as Nigel's low growl was met with a flashback to him telling Grigg what perfect tits they had.

"I read this book once," Nigel said thoughtfully, reaching over and placing a hand on top of Grigg's once more, "Left Hand of Darkness… It's about this planet called Gethen, and all the people there have a sort of fluid gender. You ever read it?"

Grigg's heart swelled and felt fit to burst.

Grigg smiled.

Chapter End Notes

Due to fics I plan to post for upcoming events/fests, Ch13 of Gethen will post on 2nd August

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Nigel and Grigg start dating. For real this time.

A kaleidoscope of butterflies fluttered in Grigg's belly as they waited outside the bar for Nigel.

It had been happening increasingly since the day Grigg had given Nigel their card at the coffee shop. Silly really considering that they already had each other's numbers. But there was something fun in it too, this sort of roleplay. First as boyfriends and now as strangers, as they tried to find a place for whatever this was at some point between the two.

All day as they'd finished up work, as they'd gone home, got changed. Changed again another two times before settling on a new on a pair of high-waisted pants - standard part of their wardrobe - a plain if slightly tight fitting t-shirt, and tailored pinstripe jacket with a feminine bias.

They were wearing the *feminine* bracelet and a corded necklace that matched it well, the silver pendent resting against Grigg’s chest in a way that they could only describe as sexy. Which they didn’t want to admit was sort of the point.

One thing Grigg could definitely own was that their wardrobe had significantly improved since they came out. In fact, Kat was always sending Grigg links to clothes she had come across that she thought they'd like.

So in that respect confidence was high whilst waiting for Nigel outside the bar. The only thing pulling the wings off their butterflies was the thought of dating. Of maybe being with someone intimately - it was hard to imagine when they had only just started to get to grips with all this.

But this was Nigel, they had to keep scalding themselves. Yes in many respects this was all new, but this was still Nigel - the only person who had been understanding in the bedroom and out of it.

The very thought of it, of the things they'd done together, had Grigg's butterflies taking flight again.

The butterflies sent Grigg's stomach into a flutter when they spotted Nigel walking up the road. They saw each other immediately and Nigel's smile stole Grigg's breath. Maybe he thought Grigg might not show up? He looked so relieved and happy, and… smitten.

Grigg swallowed, trying to level out the nervous energy they felt coursing through them as Nigel approached. Sweaty palms, uneven breaths. Heart hammering in their chest.

*

Nigel wasn't about to even attempt to hide the fact of how pleased he was to see Grigg. He really hadn't been sure Grigg would be there, worried that those previous doubts and feelings would arise.

He'd been totally prepared for Grigg not to turn up and to call them up and tell them that they needed to stop overthinking this shit.

Grigg had been right to overthink it before, Nigel had to agree to that. They hadn't been in a good place with their gender identity, and being involved with Nigel one way or the other just made things more difficult. Nigel understood that completely.

But was also completely sure that the same was not true now. And that, either way, he'd never stopped wanting Grigg.

There was a level footing now, and Nigel was more than happy to forget as much or as little of what went before as was necessary, if that's what it took.

He took a breath and strolled over, trying to seem as nonchalant as possible, and enjoying Grigg's unguarded smile.

They looked fucking beautiful. Not just the clothes but the confidence they exuded, they looked more settled in their own skin than Nigel had ever seen before. It made every part of him swell with affection.

"Hey," Nigel grinned as he came to a stop in front of Grigg.

"Hi," Grigg replied, now both grinning at each other like idiots.

"Um… shall we?" Nigel indicated the door to the bar, whilst wondering if he should have kissed Grigg's cheek or something? Wasn't like he'd been on a huge number of dates in his life, and never with someone who he'd already been fucking and previously been their fake boyfriend.

Grigg inclined their head and set off into the bar.

It was quiet and dimly lit. Nigel liked coming here sometimes, especially nights like this when the sports bars were all playing some game or other so this place was all the more deserted.

"This is nice, I've never been here." Grigg commented, looking around as Nigel steered them towards one of the empty booth tables at the back.

"I wanted us to go somewhere we could talk. Get to know each other," Nigel smiled as they slid in opposite each other.

A server came and took their order for drinks and some bar snacks and then they fell into a silence which Nigel couldn't quite call comfortable or uncomfortable. Limbo.

So he cleared his throat.

"Um, so… Grigg," Nigel hesitated for a moment, not sure whether Grigg actually preferred Gigi or only sometimes? He pushed that query aside for later in order to ask something more pressing. "I just want to… clarify. I want to date you, I want to get to know you and see where this goes, maybe it becomes something serious. I… want to make sure we're on the same page."

Nigel bottled out of adding that dating was the only option, that he wasn't up for anything casual again. Not with Grigg. But he equally knew that if Grigg said that was all they were up for, he very may well crumble.

Grigg blushed, looked down at their hands and toyed with the bracelet Nigel had given them.

"I want that too," Grigg said quietly. "I think… I mean, I want to try. You… You're a wonderful man Nigel, and I'm sure I don't deserve anything from you after how I treated you. And I think I'm ready to date. I just… don't want to hurt you if I realise I'm not."

Nigel couldn't help but reach over and take Grigg's hand, pulling it into his own, "We'll go slow." Nigel rumbled the words. "But we're not… um, friends with benefits. Not unless the benefit is that we're actually dating." Nigel grinned.

Grigg snorted a laugh at that and something lifted in the air.

The server arrived with their drinks and Nigel relaxed back into his chair, wishing that they were sat next to each other, not opposite.

*

The evening was going better than Grigg could have possibly imagined. They talked and laughed, the chemistry they'd had right from the beginning, was still there.

Grigg was a little tipsy when they went to the bathroom, and just as tipsy when they came back. Nigel was sat back in the booth with fresh drinks for them, having gone up to order more drinks and the food that Grigg surely needed at this point.

They'd been too nervous to eat much more than a snack during the day, and was regretting that now, on many levels. Though they had to admit it was nice to feel a little buzzed, a little more confident and relaxed.

"Hi," Grigg said, breathily, as they dropped into the booth next to Nigel instead of sliding in opposite.

"Hello gorgeous," Nigel purred and grinned, looking like he wanted to consume Grigg whole.

Which Grigg was sure not to mind at all, a shiver running all over their skin. Then Nigel's smile faltered a bit and he scooted back to make room between them.

Ah yes, taking it slow. Grigg so desperately did not want to take it slow now that they were actually here and Nigel was sat right there. Which they knew was not okay, given how it might once more seem like they were just blowing hot and cold.

“How slow is slow?” Grigg had sort of meant to ask this internally but realised they’d said it out loud.

Nigel huffed a laugh, “Don’t tempt me darling.”

“Is kissing on the first date allowed? Because I really want to kiss you,” Grigg admitted, only a slight slur to his words.

Nigel slid back across the seat, closer as he put an arm around Grigg’s waist and pulled them tight, “I think kissing on a first date is more than acceptable…” Nigel murmured the words just above Grigg’s lips.

Breath coming in little pants, Grigg closed their eyes, waiting for the press of Nigel’s lips.

And then plates hit the table and the thud pulled Grigg from their reverie to see that the server had brought their food and was placing it down with an apologetic look.

Nigel chuckled and Grigg’s cheeks heated.

Nigel kept one arm around Grigg’s waist as they ate.

*

Nigel woke with a light feeling in his chest and knew instantly that Grigg was back in his life, even if not in his bed.

The date had been amazing. Casual and sweet, though Grigg apparently sobered enough after the food not to suggest a kiss again. And that was cool, they had all the time in the world.

Even so, his morning wood wasn’t going anywhere whilst he replayed the almost kiss they shared at the bar, then the rest of the evening laughing and teasing each other before they went their separate ways home. With a grunt, Nigel pushed back his covers and took his cock in hand.

He was immediately hit with memories of Grigg beneath him, over him, in him. All variations of the ways they’d already been together that left his entire being eager for more. It also resulted in him coming after only a few quick, hard strokes. His heart hammering in his chest with eager anticipation as he did so.

The buzzed feeling didn’t leave him all day. In fact it only increased when he received a message from Grigg at lunchtime.

~I'd like to cook dinner for you at my place on Sunday evening. If you're up for a second date.

Nigel could practically feel the nervousness in the message, the fear that Nigel would turn them down. Which was crazy, but he understood. Grigg had said it themselves - after how

they'd treated Nigel. After how things had been between them before.

Nigel replied without hesitation.

~I'd love to darling.

*

After their Friday night date, Sunday came around real quick, and Grigg was already wondering if they were overstepping. Was a date two days later too soon? They were supposed to be taking it slow, though it was hard to say what slow was for them and Nigel.

It was just so hard to deny the fact that they wanted to see Nigel again that soon. Now that they were spending time together again, it was hard not to want to go back to spending each weekend together.

It was even harder to hide their excitement at seeing Nigel when he turned up Sunday evening as arranged.

Grigg had made a simple pasta dish and had laid out the table for a romantic meal.

Nigel hesitated at the door before leaning in to kiss Grigg's cheek, which made Grigg blush and shiver. Nigel hesitated again as he stepped into the house and Grigg was hesitant in closing the door behind him. Then he noticed the gift box in Nigel's hand.

“Nigel?” Grigg frowned at Nigel and then down at the little box.

Nigel waved his hand dismissively, whilst clearly looking as nervous as Nigel had ever looked - which wasn’t a lot but enough. Grigg’s frown continued as Nigel handed them the flat rectangle.

“I thought I should bring… I didn’t want to bring flowers or chocolate, didn’t seem right. And I know fuck all about wine gorgeous, we’d have ended up with some sort slop.” Nigel stopped abruptly as though he’d run out of words, his eyes focused on the box.

“That’s really very sweet of you,” Grigg smiled, “You shouldn’t have.”

Grigg contemplated leaving the present for later, unsure of the etiquette of these things. They had never been gifted something by a date before. It was the look on Nigel’s face that decided it.

“Let’s grab a drink,” Grigg lead the way to the kitchen and poured them both wine before taking a seat at the breakfast bar. Nigel took the one next to them, close enough that there was no way of not touching in some way. As Nigel angled his top half away, his thigh pushed against Grigg’s and Grigg just smiled in response and Nigel didn’t bother moving again.

Grigg peeled the ribbon from the box, setting it aside before easing the lid open.

“Nigel!” Grigg exclaimed, truly taken aback.

“Don’t get too excited,” Nigel placated, “I got it from some high street accessory store, not Tiffany’s.”

Grigg noted the slight blush on Nigel’s cheeks and smiled.

“It’s definitely the thought that counts.”

And it was so damn thoughtful.

Grigg couldn’t help but gaze down and grin at the sparkly robot pendant. They let out a sigh, somewhat overwhelmed.

“Really Nigel… I…” Grigg had no words, it was the most thoughtful thing they’d ever been given.

They were both quiet for a moment and then Grigg couldn’t help but lean in and kiss Nigel’s cheek as thanks.

But as Nigel leaned in too they both moved and accidentally ended up with their lips meeting in a gentle press.

Grigg sighed into the kiss, wanting to melt.

It felt so good. As good as they remembered, and more.

Box still in hand, Grigg moved into the kiss as they both opened to each other. The moment Nigel’s tongue slipped into their mouth they couldn’t help but moan and lean further until they were practically in Nigel’s lap.

And then Nigel’s arms were around them, lifting them closer and pressing their bodies together.

It was when Grigg whimpered that Nigel pulled back and looked deeply at them.

He stroked a little hair from Grigg’s eyes and pressed another gentle kiss to their lips.

“If you want this then I’m okay with it. But consider this your reminder that we were going to take it slow.” Nigel rumbled the words against Grigg's lips.

*

It had taken everything in Nigel to slow Grigg down.

He couldn’t deny how much he wanted to fuck Grigg. How much he longed for that. How often he masturbated to that, went to sleep thinking about that, and then dreamt about it all night on to wake in the morning still hard and wanting.

And Grigg had been happy to slow down once they’d been called on it. The disappointment in them both was obvious, but Nigel, for one, knew it was for the best. He’d already made a point in his mind of not putting out until the third date or after.

That felt about right and he knew they really needed that time. Needed the dates. The temptation to just go back to fucking each other all weekend in Nigel's apartment and nothing else might rear its head. And Nigel didn't want that.

Well, he did. But he also wanted everything else.

All the things he'd wanted before but that hadn't been possible at the time.

And now it was. It seemed within reach. So he was more than fucking delighted to sit and eat the nice pasta Grigg had cooked for them. Drink wine. Talk.

It was weird discovering so much more about someone he already knew so well. They talked about their jobs and hobbies, all of which Nigel knew already but just not in the detail he was now hearing it. It had all been stuff they'd picked up about each other in passing for the most part before. It just made him ache for more.

"What are you doing next weekend gorgeous?" Nigel tried to sound casual as he asked it, but he really was getting fucking eager for that third date and the thought of maybe putting out.

"Oh, um…" Grigg blushed and looked a little embarrassed, "I'm going to a convention."

"Convention?" Nigel couldn't help the little sneer on his lips. Not at the thought of a convention, but more so at how that seemed like the last place in the world he'd fit in despite desperately wanting to invite himself along to be able to spend that time with Grigg.

"Yeah, ScifiCon is great, it's really small. Do… do you want to come?"

"I-I don't know if it's my scene, darling," Nigel hesitated.

Grigg nodded with understanding, "It's not for everyone."

They didn't seem disappointed, just accepting, but even so it made Nigel frown.

"Fuck it. The only scifi I know is the Left Hand of Darkness, but I figure that will fucking do. Count me in."

Grigg beamed in response and Nigel knew he'd always do anything in return for that smile.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

A sudden end to taking it slow...

Nigel thought he'd feel out of place, but the convention was pretty easy going. A welcoming environment, and he understood the appeal for Grigg immediately.

Grigg hadn't wanted to dress up, but at every turn there were fans in costumes. Including loads of women dressed as male characters and vice versa. There seemed to be a whole bunch of guys dressed as the new female Doctor Who. Not that Nigel knew who they were meant to be until Grigg explained.

Even so, it was pretty cool. People could just come as whatever with no judgement on what that might or might not mean about them and their personal lives.

"You could have dressed up gorgeous, I wouldn't have felt weird about it, if you were worried about that," Nigel muttered against Grigg's ear as they walked arm in arm around the market hall looking at the props and merchandise.

Grigg smiled and shook their head, a little blush there. But Nigel wondered if maybe next time Grigg might feel like they could dress up. As it was they were wearing a pair of black pants that ended at their calves, some converse and a t-shirt with some sort of sci-fi reference on it that Nigel didn't get.

There were gender neutral bathrooms and a general lack of judgement about the place that made Nigel think about the little he knew of sci-fi. Stuff like Left Hand of Darkness. Or Star Trek - the idea of a utopia where everyone was accepted no matter who or what they were. No wonder it had always appealed to Grigg, even before they were even sure why themselves.

He couldn't help his chest swelling at each reminder of this as they walked around, putting his arm around Grigg's waist and leaning in to nuzzle against their cheek or neck every now and then. Savouring the little sigh it pulled from Grigg each time.

They aimlessly ambled about, looking at things here and there and attending a panel with a couple of actors from some show Nigel had never heard of but Grigg sat there practically bouncing in their seat.

When Grigg went to the bathroom they left Nigel browsing the market stalls and he ended up finding a signed copy of an Ursula Le Guin book he'd never heard of, but bought it for Grigg

all the same. Which earned him a blush and a passionate kiss in front of the bookseller which resulted in a few whoops from passers by.

All in all, it was an unexpectedly enjoyable day, but then anything would be enjoyable for Nigel if it involved Grigg.

They took one last stroll around the stalls on their way out the door and Grigg stopped them at a props and costume seller.

“See something you like gorgeous?” Nigel asked, leaning in close to growl the words in Grigg’s ear.

“Oh, um… The…” Grigg didn’t finish, just pointed at a costume hanging on the back wall. Nigel wasn’t sure exactly what it was from, but it was clearly meant to be some sort of uniform - a 60s style mini dress in block colour with an insignia.

“You want it?” Nigel asked, slipping his hands around Grigg as he stepped behind them, resting his head on their shoulder.

The dress was very petite so Nigel wasn’t that surprised when Grigg shook his head, “It won’t fit.”

“Hey folks,” The guy behind the stall wandered over with a smile. “We’ve got a larger selection at our warehouse, including a massive range of sizes." He picked up a business card from a stack at the table and handed it over to Grigg, who took it with a shy smile. “You can order online or drop by if you’re in the neighbourhood. Just ring the bell.”

"Thanks," Grigg nodded and put the card in their pocket.

*

Nigel couldn't say he wasn't disappointed when Grigg didn't invite him back to their place after the convention. But then he didn't invite Grigg to his either, wanting to keep that ball in Grigg's court.

He was, however, delighted when Grigg text the next morning asking him to meet in the city. It was a quieter part of town but there were some nice places there and they met for a pleasant Sunday brunch at a cute little cafe.

"We better not tell Ifrit and Salem we're cheating on them with other coffee shops," Nigel joked and Grigg chuckled and smiled. The smile struck something deep in Nigel and he couldn't help a sigh, "You look beautiful today, Gigi."

Grigg blushed and hid behind their coffee mug. They seemed to do that all the time now and Nigel liked it. There was some wonderful power and joy in being able to make Grigg blush.

"You… always look very nice," Grigg responded, "I… can't say more… not in polite company."

Nigel drew a shaky breath and tried to ignore the twitch of his cock at that. Grigg had been kind of shy since they'd started actually dating, and it was nice to see them becoming more comfortable again in this way in public.

Brunch arrived and it wasn't lost on Nigel that they sat gazing at each other as they ate. This was more than he'd ever hoped for with Grigg. He'd not let himself hope really, because it would hurt too much to be rejected now that it was more than casual.

Nigel reached across and took Grigg's hand, holding it as they ate and smiled at each other.

"What's the plan darling?" Nigel played with Grigg's fingers and resisted the urge to lift them to his mouth to kiss.

"I… wanted to go shopping. If you're cool with that?"

"Shopping?" Nigel frowned, "bit of an odd date gorgeous."

Grigg looked a little pained and uncomfortable and Nigel changed tack immediately, knowing how sensitive Grigg could be about these things. Though that didn't feel like the problem this time. There was definitely something else going on given how much more confident they had seemed to be.

"As long as I get to spend time with you," Nigel purred and did lift Grigg's hand to his lips then, pressing a kiss to the back of it before setting it back on the table with a smile.

A smile Grigg reflected despite their slightly pink cheeks.

*

They'd finished eating and paid, before wandering in completely the opposite direction that Nigel had expected. Away from the built up shops and towards the factory district. There were a few businesses there, some factories with outlets and shop fronts, but Nigel had no clue where Grigg was leading him.

When Grigg stopped them outside a massive warehouse Nigel thought about the day before, the convention stalls and it clicked.

"This is… um… they carry specialty items. Costumes and…" Grigg trailed off and Nigel's eyes went wide with understanding as he nodded. "The stall…"

"Ah ok, the… space girl thing…"

Grigg didn't nod or reply, but their heated cheeks was enough.

Nigel pulled them close and smooched their cheek, "I am all for it gorgeous, I'm happy you wanted me to come with you."

And he was. It made his chest ache being included in something like this. He had been there for a lot of Grigg's exploration, but this didn't feel the same. This felt like being let into the

personal life of someone he cared for a great deal and reflected back how much they cared in turn. At least he hoped that was the case.

He let Grigg lead them in through a poorly signed public entrance and was immediately taken aback by all the stuff inside. Displayed in row upon row of racks and shelves, there were all sorts of sci-fi and fantasy costumes. Much more than he'd expected when they'd spoken to the man at the stall.

"I just," Grigg cleared their throat but seemed pretty confident when they continued, "wanted to find that dress in my size."

"Let's fucking find it!" Nigel grinned and took Grigg's hand. "You'll look fucking gorgeous in it Gigi."

*

Grigg had found the row of dresses they were looking for with the help of one of the staff, who didn't even bat an eye about it. They looked over them for a few minutes trying to eye up the size, given that they weren't exactly made for a male physique.

"Here," The guy helping them said brightly as he pulled one from the rack. "You totally have the bod for this!" He made a point of looking Grigg up and down and giving a friendly wink. All the same Grigg didn't miss the rumble in Nigel's throat in response. And neither did the server.

"Looks like we have a jealous type here," He continued playfully. "Come on daddy, you can wait on the seats by the changing rooms so you know this lovely creature is safe and sound."

Grigg couldn't help the laugh that burst forth, though Nigel grunted in response.

"Yeah, come on daddy." Grigg snickered.

The server took them through to the very back of the warehouse to what might have once been offices, but had been converted into changing cubicles.

"I'll leave you to try this. Give me a shout if you need anything." The man smiled and left them to it. Nigel dropped down into one of the chairs and eyed the man suspiciously as he headed back out onto the warehouse floor.

Grigg chuckled again and leaned down to give Nigel a peck on the cheek.

"He's just having fun."

Nigel responded by pulling Grigg into his lap and kissing him thoroughly. When he finally let Grigg go he responded with a grin.

"I know darling."

Grigg was still smiling, heart swelling, as they went into the changing room. They stripped off their shirt and pants, smiling at the barely capable little panties they'd worn, and took a

deep breath before pulling on the dress.

Grigg trembled as they looked at themselves in the mirror. The dress fit perfectly. It ended just above the knee and despite being meant for a cis-female body, it looked right. It felt good.

"N-Nigel… could you, um… come see?" Grigg peaked out of the changing room and asked nervously. Nigel stood from where he'd been sat in the little waiting area and nodded, coming straight in and closing the door behind him.

"Fuck," Nigel breathed out the word as he looked Grigg up and down. "You look amazing." The words were rumbled and Grigg didn't miss the way that Nigel palmed his cock.

"I… Maybe when we get back to mine…" Grigg started, chest heaving.

"Fuck," Nigel repeated, palming his cock again before pulling Grigg tight to him so that there was no way Grigg could miss how hard he was. Grigg let out a trembling breath, unable to stop themselves pressing their hips into Nigel's and groaning.

"I'm clean, I… I haven't been with anyone else since you," Nigel muttered against Grigg's skin and Grigg trembled at all the implications, as Nigel's fingers reached for the skirt hem.

Nigel had stopped picking up guys. Nigel wanted to fuck right there and then.

*

"We're in a changing room," Grigg reminded him and for a moment he faltered.

But then Grigg's mouth was on his and fuck, he hadn't thought that when they finally slept together again it would be like horny teenagers unable to stop themselves, practically out in public. But here they were.

Nigel was so fucking hard already he suspected he'd come within about ten seconds of getting inside Grigg.

They were kissing passionately, hard and rough. Grigg's arms were so tight around his neck that there was barely any room to move. Even so, Nigel found the room to start undoing his pants, shucking them and his underwear down to his ass until his bare cock was rubbing against Grigg's clothed but obvious arousal.

“We just need to be quiet, are you...” Nigel trailed off, not wanting to think about the past.

Grigg nodded, “C-clean…” they were shaking in his arms, clearly overcome by the whole situation, but not stopping it, Nigel took Grigg’s mouth again, devouring them.

At the feel of him Grigg groaned into his mouth and shivered. Nigel hiked up Grigg’s skirt, drawing another moan, and then ripped off the barely there underwear they were wearing.

“Oh fuck… oh god…” Grigg trembled, pulling back and resting their forehead against Nigel’s as he pulled Grigg’s leg up to his waist. “Slow… go… just go slow… I haven’t…

Since we…"

Nigel groaned. He'd hoped that Grigg might not have been with anyone else, though he had no right to that hope.

Nigel pulled back enough to spit in his hand and slick up his cock as well as he was able, before pressing it against Grigg's hole.

"Oh god… oh god…" Grigg clung to him, and Nigel could feel their cock pulsing against him and was pretty sure Grigg was going to come almost immediately too.

"Oh fuck, gorgeous," Nigel groaned against Grigg's neck as he pushed them against the wall of the changing room and angled his hips up.

They both fought down their moans as Nigel started to press into Grigg.

Grigg was so fucking tight. It was dry but okay, Grigg was relaxing into it, letting Nigel ease in. They'd never done it like this before, never raw, but Nigel could feel Grigg easing around him. Even so he went slow as requested, not wanting to hurt Grigg in anyway.

"So fucking good," Nigel muttered.

And then Nigel went too fast for a moment, an involuntary thrust of his hips. He stilled as Grigg let out a sharp cry, which then turned into a groan.

"Please…" Grigg moaned.

Nigel held back the roar he felt in his chest, instead pushing Grigg hard against the wall and better planting his own feet. Within a moment he was fucking up into Grigg hard and fast. Rougher than they'd ever fucked before, and he knew they both needed it.

"My beautiful fucking girl, are you going to come on my cock Gigi?" Nigel's tone was so low it almost sounded menacing to his own ears and Grigg let out another sharp cry.

At that he put his hand over Grigg's mouth, "Quiet gorgeous…" he muttered as he started to fuck Grigg even harder. Grigg moaned and went almost pliant in their own pleasure, as Nigel continued to pound into them.

It felt like a lifetime. This reconnection. This catharsis they both needed. But in reality it was barely minutes before he felt Grigg clench around him and spill all over his shirt.

"Fuck, fuck…" Nigel muttered, taking his hand from Grigg's mouth so he could hold both hips tight and slam home two, three more times before he came with a shudder. He thrust shallowly a few more times through his climax, pushing his come deep into Grigg.

They held each, panting, for long minutes before Nigel did the gentlemanly thing and reached for Grigg's discarded shirt and pressed it between Grigg's legs as he pulled out. He could feel Grigg trembling and just needed to show them the utter devotion he had.

Nigel sank to his knees and tenderly cleaned up his release as it leaked out of Grigg. Grigg let out little whimpers as they continued to shake, until Nigel stood again and Grigg fell immediately into his arms, burying their face against his neck.

Grigg was sobbing and Nigel felt his chest tighten.

“I’m sorry gorgeous. Was I too rough? Did I hurt you?”

Grigg shook their head against him.

“N-no… I’m… It’s not that. I missed you…” Grigg sobbed the words and Nigel felt his own eyes begin to sting.

“Oh darling,” Nigel pressed kisses to the side of Grigg’s neck. “I missed you too,” he finally replied through a tight throat, despite really wanting to say *I love you*.

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Grigg has an interesting response to discovering Nigel's police uniform kink...

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Rainy for the suggestion of cop/uniform kink!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Grigg woke, stretched and sighed.

They felt so good. A satisfied feeling inside and out, that they didn't need to guess at the reason for.

Grigg nuzzled against Nigel's back, rolling to spoon behind him in the bed, and let out another sigh, smiling against warm skin as Nigel stirred and pressed his ass back a little. Seeking Grigg's morning wood to grind against.

It was the kind of light and playful interaction that they needed. The day before had been incredibly intense and overwhelming. Grigg had never had sex in a public place before, though the thought of it made them a little hard.

But it had been raw and savage, emotionally if nothing else. It had been exactly what they had both needed - a reconnection. Grigg was just glad they hadn't been caught in the act, but did feel bad that when they'd removed the dress, paid for it and left, the staff would find the dressing rooms reeking of spunk.

Grigg buried their flushed face against Nigel's back, both turned on and embarrassed.

Nigel responded by pressing his ass back again and letting out a little murmur of encouragement.

Grigg trembled. They'd missed this so much. And it was different now. Before whenever they'd been casually affectionate like this there had always been something at the back of their mind reminding them that this wasn't real, not to get too involved. But it was real now. No more friends with benefits.

They were dating. And now they were sleeping together. And the world felt so big and open ahead of them that Grigg felt fit to burst.

Grigg let out a shuddering breath and moved their hips against Nigel, their cock slotting perfectly between Nigel's asscheeks as he ground back against them. Another sleepy but encouraging hum from Nigel was all Grigg needed to slip their hand to Nigel's hip for a brace and begin rutting against him.

"Oh fuck…" Grigg swallowed and closed their eyes, thrusting against Nigel where their cock was trapped against his hot flesh.

"Mmm, Gigi, that feels so good," Nigel rumbled with a sleep heavy voice.

Grigg let out a little noise at the words, not quite a cry but more than a moan, humping harder and faster until they let out a startled cry and came across Nigel's lower back.

"Oh god…" Grigg muttered, pulling back. Not even sure themselves whether they were referring to their hard and fast orgasm or the mess they'd made.

Nigel pulled some tissues from the box on his nightstand and passed them back to Grigg.

Grigg couldn't help but smile as they took them and wiped up the mess before Nigel rolled onto his back.

"A beautiful sight," Nigel growled, looking up at Grigg's uninhibited grin.

It was such a strange thing to feel relief and happiness over, but the mundanity of Nigel passing the tissues, of Grigg wiping up their mess, was so domestic and unpretentious that it lifted Grigg's heart.

Nigel pulled Grigg to his side, cradling him against his chest. Grigg couldn't miss the man's hardness under the blankets but Nigel seemed unbothered, he was easily the most in control person Grigg had ever met.

"Still worked up over yesterday, darling?" Nigel murmured into Grigg's hair.

They hadn't really thought about it, but couldn't really deny it now they had. They'd have probably gotten hard again at the reminder if they hadn't just come.

"It was… hot." Grigg laughed. "But also, I don't know… I- I needed it. I needed us to have this back. I'm glad we waited, but yesterday felt right. Though… I'm not sure we'll be allowed back to that store."

Nigel chuckled, "Probably not. I think they have an online shop".

Grigg snuggled in closer and pressed their smile against Nigel's chest as they snaked their hand down to Nigel's crotch, loving the feel of him in their hand.

"You liked me dressed up like that…" Grigg murmured against Nigel's skin, feeling bold.

"Mmm," Nigel relaxed back into his pillow and closed his eyes, licking his lips before he replied, "You looked like a fucking space princess, Gigi. Fucking irresistible."

“Yeah?” Grigg said, breathlessly as they began to pump Nigel’s cock. “We could do that some time you know? I could be your intergalactic princess…”

Nigel groaned and thrust his hips the once before biting on his lower lip.

“Or, we could… Do you have any fantasies you want to… try?” Grigg swallowed, heart racing. This wasn’t something they’d actively thought of but the way it had all gone down in the dressing room, and Nigel’s reaction to it now opened the door. There was so much they’d done together, so much Grigg had explored, this seemed a fun and natural progression that they could now allow themselves, now they really were together.

“Oh fuck,” Nigel muttered, his hips twitching again, “I’ve always… I was a troublemaker in my younger days,” he started, eyes still closed, perhaps imagining it all as he enjoyed Grigg’s ministrations. “I got hauled in by the politie more than once. And some of those fuckers were hot. In their fucking uniforms and that commanding attitude. They’d have probably beaten the shit out of me if I’d have tried something…”

“But you thought about it…” Grigg supplied, “You wanted one of those cops to put you in cuffs and fuck you up against the wall right?”

Nigel groaned and nodded, “Fuck yes,” his hips began to pump and Grigg picked up the pace, their own cock trying to stir once more.

“He’d tell you to be quiet as he fucked you so hard you wanted to scream,” Grigg murmured.

“Oh fuck, Gigi…” Nigel called out their name as he came under the sheets, his come smearing all over Grigg’s fist as they worked him through the release. “Fuck, that was hot.”

Nigel finally opened his eyes and looked at Grigg. That same look he’d always had but that Grigg hadn’t really wanted to accept before - complete adoration. Grigg smiled, leaning in to kiss Nigel deeply.

*

Nigel put his key into his apartment door and turned it, about to open the door when he felt someone step behind him.

"Excuse me sir, can I have a word?"

Nigel frowned, recognising Grigg's voice and having no clue what was happening. He turned to look and blinked.

Grigg was wearing a full police uniform and aviator shades, baton in hand.

Nigel shuddered and blinked again. Not remotely wanting to derail whatever Grigg was up to, he instead compsed himself a little and replied, "What seems to be the problem officer?"

"I think it would be best if we talked inside, don't you." It wasn't a question and Grigg reached past him and pushed the door open.

"Fuck…" Nigel let the word out under his breath. In response Grigg pressed his baton against Nigel's increasingly interested cock.

"Are we gonna have a problem here?" Grigg's no nonsense tone sent a shiver over him.

"No, sir," Nigel swallowed and turned back to the door, pushing it the rest of the way open and letting them both in. He closed it behind them as Grigg looked around, as though appraising a place they'd never been to before.

"What's all this about officer?" Nigel asked, surprised by his own tone. A mix of timid and cocky, just like he had been at seventeen trying not to get a stiffy whilst being questioned by police.

"I'll ask the questions," Grigg replied bluntly and turned to face him.

They looked so stern, as they removed their glasses, revealing an incredulous look. Nigel let out a shuddering breath.

"We have reports of inappropriate activities taking place on these premises." Grigg seemed more stern by the moment, even a little intimidating in their confidence.

"Inappropriate-" Nigel started to ask but instead gasped as Grigg closed the space between them and pressed the baton to his crotch again. This time so forcefully, it took everything Nigel had not to grind against it.

"You wouldn't know about that would you?" Grigg menaced next to his ear.

"N-no sir," Nigel stuttered as he panted, his dick getting increasingly harder against the pressure of the baton. He let out a low groan as Grigg began to ease the baton back and forth against him. A light and taunting friction.

"Is that so?" Grigg breathed the words against his ear and Nigel moaned. "You know, we could sort this all out very simply," Grigg moved their free hand up to stroke down the side of Nigel's face. A gentle gesture in juxtaposition to the harsh words and forceful baton.

"Yeah?" Nigel gulped.

Grigg's hand moved from his cheek and grabbed his jaw, turning his face into Grigg's until their lips were pressed together and Grigg was forcefully kissing him.

Nigel was panting, trembling with need as Grigg kissed him demandingly. It was over quickly, Grigg pulled back and sneered at Nigel, another few rubs of the baton before they pulled that away too, leaving Nigel hard and wanting.

"On your knees, pretty boy." Grigg smirked, and Nigel obliged. "You know what to do, I'm sure."

Nigel damn near came in his pants, just managing to hold it together enough to calm for a moment and drop to his knees as commanded. He leaned in and nuzzled against the hard outline of Grigg's cock in the smart pants.

Grigg gave an affirmative hum and threaded their fingers into Nigel’s hair.

Nigel took the cue and popped Grigg's fly button before slowly easing the zipper down. Nigel wasn't all that surprised to see they had gone without underwear and easily pulled Grigg's hard cock out the top of the pants before immediately taking them to the back of his throat.

"Fuck…" Grigg moaned, sounding for a moment like he might break character, but then they murmured, "You're good at that. Plenty of practice I bet." There was an accusation in the tone that made Nigel shiver. An implication of what Grigg thought of the character Nigel was essentially playing.

His younger self.

Wayward and delinquent. And if the cops had known he was gay they'd have probably thought he was a whore too, Maybe a rent boy. At the least a deviant.

"Pretty good at taking cock, boy." Grigg growled, a gentle movement to their hips, just holding back from thrusting.

Nigel hummed as he lathed Grigg with his tongue before taking them all the way in again, swalowing around their cockhead.

Grigg groaned and tugged sharply at Nigel's hair until he was almost all the way off their cock, "None of that, I'm gonna come in your ass and not before."

Nigel almost gagged as Grigg thrust into him and then pulled them apart, practically yanking Nigel to his feet before releasing his hair.

"If you're a good boy I might let you off this once." Grigg growled and pushed Nigel towards the sofa.

He was so fucking turned on that he wasn't sure how much longer he'd last. It wasn't often that he was on the receiving end of rough treatment and he couldn't deny he liked it. Given his solid and athletic build many had enjoyed being playfully thrown around by him, but few had considered reciprocating. Grigg had a more slender frame which they often carried more delicately, which was deceptive, especially when they were stood side by side. Because Grigg was compact and strong. They cycled every day and that apparently paid off in every muscle of their body. So Nigel knew better than to be surprised when Grigg pushed him over the arm of the sofa with no effort at all, holding him down with a hand at the base of his back.

He could make out from the noises behind him that Grigg was shuking his pants further down, and then hands came around and fumbled for a moment with the lack of visibility, and then popped open Nigel's trousers. Nigel grunted as the friction played over his cock when Grigg roughly pulled down his pants and underwear.

Nigel's heart was hammering, unsure how exactly this was going to play out and wanting Grigg to know he was up for anything, no matter how rough, without breaking the moment. He didn't need to, because then Grigg was kicking his feet apart.

"Spread 'em" Grigg ordered, and Nigel complied.

He moaned as Grigg pressed up against him, cock in the crease of his ass as he reached around and shoved two fingers into Nigel's mouth.

"You get those as wet as you like baby," Grigg practically cooed the words but it still sounded dangerous, a taunt or challenge.

Nigel sucked on the fingers, grabbing Grigg's hand so he could fuck them into his mouth as Grigg moaned.

"I knew you fucking wanted it," Grigg said sharply and then stopped, clearly caught up in the moment and wondering if they'd gone too far with the harsh tone. But Nigel just moaned and kept the fingers moving, eventually pulling the soaked digits out to reply.

"Fucking teach me a lesson then officer, I know that's what you want."

"Mouthy," Grigg reprimanded before pressing their fingers against Nigel's hole. They both took sharp breaths as Grigg eased them in.

Nigel knew Grigg was trying to be gentle, their confidence slipping now that physical pain or discomfort might happen.

So Nigel pressed back and panted, “Just fucking do it.”

He heard Grigg gasp quietly before fucking their fingers into Nigel, rough and almost dry.

It had been a while since Nigel had bottomed, but he relaxed easily into the fingering. Especially as Grigg was managing to stroke his prostate almost every thrust, to the point where his cock was getting fucking painful. But his body was relaxing, allowing the intrusion, and whilst he knew that Grigg's cock, being girthier than their fingers, would be a stretch, he knew he could take it.

"Come on officer, fuck me," Nigel growled before taking hold of his own cock in the little gap he had between his body and the sofa. He moaned, "Please fuck me…"

"Fuck, such pretty begging," Grigg moaned as they pulled out their fingers. Nigel whimpered at the loss and then grunted as Grigg lined up and pushed into him without hesitation.

“Fuuuuuck” Nigel cried out, one hand gripping on his dick, the other on the sofa as Grigg pretty much doubled him over it and fucked into him.

It was hard and rough and so close to so many of Nigel’s youthful fantasies that he didn’t dare pump his cock or it would all be over.

“You like that?” Grigg asked, breathless as they continued to pound Nigel’s ass.

Nigel grunted, the breath knocked out of him on every thrust.

Grigg moved one hand into his hair and tightened the grip, “I said, you like that?” Grigg growled.

“Y-yes sir,” Nigel managed between gasps for breath, his eyes rolling and his body going pliant as Grigg fucked him against the furniture. His legs started to go weak and he wasn’t sure he was going to be able to stay upright much longer. “Teach me a lesson,” He begged, hoping to urge Grigg on.

It had the desired effect because then Grigg sped up and went deep enough to make Nigel cry out.

"If there are any more disturbances here I will assume you're inviting me over, is that clear?" Grigg growled breathlessly as he fucked.

“Fuck,” Nigel spat the word, wincing as he felt his climax about to roll over him, “Yes sir, fucking… yesssss.” He cried out as he came against the side of the sofa, Grigg practically having to hold him up as they continued a few more thrusts and then came deep inside Nigel with a groan.

Grigg collapsed over his back, both of them on the verge of melting to the floor, teetering on the edge of the sofa arm as they caught their breath.

They both winced when Grigg finally pulled out. Come started to spill out of Nigel’s ass a moment before Grigg got to their knees and began to eat it out of him.

“Holy shit,” Nigel startled, gripping onto the sofa, tears starting to sting his eyes from the over stimulation as Grigg licked up their own come.

When Grigg was done, they slumped onto the floor before sprawling onto their back. Nigel eased off the sofa and did the same, panting as he lay fucked out and dizzy next to his lover.

“Was that okay?” Grigg asked, there was hesitation there. A little nervousness perhaps at the thought they might have pushed things too far.

“It was fucking amazing,” Nigel breathed out the words and grabbed for Grigg’s hand, no energy to do more than that as he tried to catch his breath. “Did I ever tell you what a fucking amazing boyfriend you are?” Nigel glanced across at Grigg, happy to see the wide grin on their face.

*

Grigg felt good.

Nigel lay sleeping, exhausted after their rough fuck earlier in the evening and Grigg couldn’t help but watch him as they were beginning to nod off themselves. They’d always known how lucky they were with Nigel, but also that they had - despite the best of intentions - taken that for granted.

They weren’t blind to how little they’d given back since the day they’d met. So Nigel’s nuzzling, his soft touches and gentle words all evening, whilst not out of the norm, meant so

much more. An acknowledgement of Grigg giving something for a change rather than taking. Not that Nigel would have ever really asked.

Grigg had purposely waited for a day that they felt really masculine. Not because they felt they needed to be in that space to do this, but because Nigel's fantasy had so clearly been of a male cop. And whilst they knew that Nigel would have not cared one bit if they were Grigg or Gigi - as they'd come to think of their more feminine side - or anywhere in between, this felt right. More comfortable.

And Grigg felt great about that. They just felt really good about recognising their own comfort levels in different situations, and was thankful for having someone so supportive in their life to be able to explore this with no concerns.

But they felt even better about being the one doing something for Nigel for a change. The man never seemed to want for much, other than Grigg's company, so it was the least they could do.

Grigg moved and snuggled against Nigel, his arms automatically opening to him even in his sleep, and Grigg sighed with contentment.

Boyfriend.

That was what Nigel had said. That's was what he considered their relationship. And whilst Grigg hadn't really considered gender neutral terms for such a thing, they found they didn't mind boyfriend one little bit. Not when it was Nigel saying it. Not when it was Nigel thinking it.

Nigel, their boyfriend.

Chapter End Notes

As I'm now heading into two weeks of posting several fics and updates for SummertimeSlick, I won't be posting chapter 16 until September 5th.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Nigel gets sick

Chapter Notes

NB: In this chapter there is some misgendering of Grigg whilst talking to strangers, Grigg is fine with it because of the context. It is also the start of a story line where Grigg's company starts losing business when they change their pronouns on their work signature.

The sick fic is Retejada's idea XD

Grigg knew they shouldn't worry, in fact they were determined not to worry for the whole weekend with only one message from Nigel.

There was a lot Grigg had wanted to talk about, and maybe it was that pressing need that was making them worry.

On the one hand Grigg didn't want to bother Nigel with this, but on the other, there wasn't anyone else they wanted to talk to about it. Of course, Grigg had to mention to their staff about the loss of a few contracts, but it wasn't the same as talking to Nigel and getting that comfort. It just felt like it might be too soon in this new relationship they were exploring.

Grigg was sure Nigel would understand, and be rightfully outraged that several of the medium sized businesses Grigg had been working with for years had decided to cancel contracts or not renew them when they heard about Grigg. It had felt like a domino effect since changing their email signature at work.

Nigel would just say good riddance, the assholes weren't worth their time. And whilst that was true, it was also going to make a small dent in the company's profits. Not enough to worry about yet, but what if more companies followed suit? Grigg sighed, concerned that it might reach the point where they would have to start letting people go.

Grigg kept checking their phone, waiting on a response from Nigel.

The two of them hadn't got back into the routine of spending every weekend together, which seemed to be the best option for them both to keep taking it slow in their own way. But it was

surprising to have only received only one message, mid morning Saturday.

Now it was Monday and Nigel wasn't at work.

Grigg had to admit to an irrational moment where they worried that Nigel was avoiding them. There was no reason to think that, they had to remind themselves, it was just a gut reaction that Grigg knew was more about them than Nigel. Nigel had never been anything but doting, even before when they were just casual.

Grigg sent the third message of the day just after lunch and then fretted for an hour before finally telling Zeller they were leaving early.

Their heart was pounding with anxiety first, and then fear as Grigg tried to call Nigel's phone whilst leaving the building. It went straight to voicemail.

Grigg hung up without leaving a message and cycled as fast as they could to Nigel's apartment.

*

Nigel groaned at the second knock. He'd ignored the first, but the second was loud and insistent. At the third he started to drag himself from the bed. By the time he got to the front door, the knocking had become hammering and he was exhausted.

"Nigel, please…" The voice sounded distant, but Nigel recognised it as Grigg's through the fog of his brain.

It took a moment of fiddling with the locks to open the door, but when he did Grigg was there and he awkwardly fell into his lover's arms.

"Nigel!" Grigg's tone was shock and concern as they managed to half carry Nigel to the sofa and set him down.

Then Grigg was on their knees in front of him, feeling his brow and brushing hair from his eyes.

"Nigel, are you okay?"

"Flu…" Nigel managed, "I'll feel better tomorrow." Nigel tried to wave his hand dismissively but it was sluggish and heavy.

Grigg was shaking their head and looking at him with wide eyes.

"Baby, you're really sick. Have you taken anything?"

Nigel nodded, "In the bedroom."

Grigg must have gone and come back because they were suddenly there with a glass of water, holding it to Nigel's lips.

“There aren’t any pills left in here,” Grigg said, Nigel noting the cold and flu remedy packaging in their hand. “When did you last have some?”

“I took some when I first started to get really rough… Saturday… I’ll pick some more up tomorrow on my way to work. The pharmacy isn’t open on a Sunday.”

“Nigel, it’s Monday today.” Grigg’s concern grew all the clearer. “You need to get back to bed. I’m going to call a doctor.”

Nigel nodded but wasn’t able to do anything more physical without assistance, which Grigg then provided.

He must have drifted off again because he could hear Grigg on the phone speaking to someone and then they were sat next to him on the bed.

“I called a doctor and they think I should take you to the ER. My car is… out of juice,” Grigg coloured a little as he said it and Nigel was sure he couldn’t adore them more for owning a car that essentially ran on donut grease. They started tapping at their phone as they continued, “I’m booking an uber.”

*

Grigg paced.

The hospital had gotten Nigel in pretty quickly. Thankfully the place was quiet, and they could see immediately that things weren’t okay. In fact between the apartment and the hospital, Nigel had seemed pretty delirious and Grigg had to admit to being increasingly scared.

What if there was something terribly wrong?

They’d wasted so much time with each other. Or maybe it was more accurate to say that Grigg had wasted so much of Nigel’s time. Time they wouldn’t get back. The idea kept running through their head - they had treated Nigel as though he were Jocelyn, judging him by her actions. But Nigel wasn’t Jocelyn, Nigel was someone Grigg could see a future with. Now there really was something between them and... Grigg was in love with Nigel, and the thought of anything happening to him made Grigg feel sick to the pit of their stomach.

“Grigg Harris? Mr Ibanescu is asking for you,” The nurse had appeared from the room Nigel had been taken to and Grigg’s heart thumped as they nodded and she lead the way. “The doctor will be with you shortly.” She informed them and let herself back out.

Nigel had been propped in the bed and had an IV attached to his arm. He looked pale and sweaty, even as he smiled weakly at Grigg and held out his hand.

Grigg took it and tried not to look as worried as they felt, though clearly not well enough.

“I’m okay gorgeous,” Nigel reassured, voice a little rough. He tugged gently on the IV, “Fluids. They took bloods and stuff, the doctor will sort me out.”

Grigg took a deep breath and nodded, trying to feel as reassured as Nigel intended.

“What’s wrong?” Nigel asked.

Grigg shook their head dismissively, “I’m fine. Just… worried sick about you, you idiot!” It was true, and if anything this whole turn of events had put Grigg’s work worries on the backburner.

Nigel eyed them for a moment, clearly not believing it was the whole truth, but then his eyes started to droop and he started to doze.

*

Nigel had been starting to nod off, Grigg sat next to him and holding his hand, as they waited. So he wasn’t really sure how long the wait had been, but at least the fluids in the drip seemed to be helping. Even so, he still felt groggy as the doctor came in, looking over his notes.

“Hello Mr Ibanescu,” He greeted politely, looking briefly at Grigg before continuing. “We’ve got your blood work back. You’ve got yourself a pretty serious bacterial chest infection there. I want to get you started on some antibiotics, we should see an improvement over night."

“Can I stay?” Grigg asked immediately, before looking at Nigel for his approval, as though Nigel was ever going to not want Grigg to stay.

The doctor looked between them for a moment, though there didn’t seem to be any judgement there that Nigel could tell. Despite this he answered the unspoken question in a no nonsense tone.

“He’s my boyfriend. He stays.”

The doctor gave a slight smile, “That’s not a problem.”

When the doctor left, Nigel looked at Grigg with the concern that he felt, "Sorry for the misgendering, gorgeous. I just thought it would be simpler…" Nigel could hear the tone of regret in his own words.

Grigg smiled and shook their head, “I understand Nigel, it’s okay. I just want to stay with you and I don’t want to have to answer a whole bunch of questions about something that is completely irrelevant to my being here.” Grigg answered softly.

Maybe it was the drugs bringing a little more clarity, but Nigel realised the depth of the concern Grigg was feeling. They looked near distraught.

“Come here darling,” Nigel encouraged, opening his arms and folding them around Grigg when their bodies pressed together.

“I didn’t want to, um… Make any assumptions. I know we’re dating now but if... I didn’t know if you’d want me here-”

Nigel cut Grigg off by pulling on their hand until they were practically on the bed. Near enough at least for Nigel to quietly growl the words, “You’re my partner, I want you here.”

Grigg let out a relieved sigh and buried themselves against Nigel’s chest.

They held onto each other tightly as Grigg muttered in his ear, “I don’t think I’m meant to get in the bed with you. Probably against hospital rules...”

“I’m a troublemaker, what can I say,” Nigel muttered, feeling himself starting to drift again now that he was all warm and snuggled up with the love of his life. "You gonna call the cops?" He playfully challenged, enjoying Grigg's chuckle as he drifted off.

*

“Nigel!” Grigg scalded as Nigel lumbered from the bedroom towards the kitchen.

“What? I’m feeling better. I need to move.” Nigel complained.

Grigg shook their head and smiled even as they rolled their eyes. Nigel was a terrible patient, but at least he was definitely on the mend. He was home.

Home.

It felt strangely not strange to think that. As comfortable as Grigg’s house was and as pokey as Nigel’s flat was, it was the place they’d spent the most time together from the very beginning. And whilst it was distinctively Nigel’s it also felt like home.

Nigel felt like home.

I love you.

The words bounced around Grigg’s head. But instead he said, “You want me to run you a bath for after lunch?” Grigg offered as Nigel leaned against the kitchen counter and picked up the sandwich Grigg had made.

Taking a bite, Nigel shook his head and spoke through the mouthful, “I’d be fine with a bedbath.”

Grigg let out a sigh of mock annoyance. Grigg ended up taking the week off work to look after Nigel once he’d been let out of the hospital, and he’d steadily improved every day. Enough to have returned to his usual humour and flirtation. In truth, taking the time off at that moment probably wasn’t the smartest move, but Nigel was more important than queerphobic ex-clients.

“I’ll settle for a bath, if you join me.” Nigel practically purred the words and Grigg couldn’t help but shudder. They hadn’t been intimate since before he got sick, and whilst Grigg was adult enough to handle that, they couldn’t deny that they’d be willing any time Nigel was.

“Come on Gigi,” Nigel encouraged. He moved away from the counter, sliding behind Grigg and enveloping them from behind, arms wrapped tight around them.

Grigg sighed and let their head drop back onto Nigel's shoulder. "I'm glad you're feeling better."

"Not going to lie gorgeous, I think I'd feel even better if I had an orgasm today." Nigel nuzzled the words against the side of Grigg's cheek, pressing his hardening cock against Grigg's ass.

Grigg was hard almost instantly, and the temptation to just bend over the counter and let Nigel ravish them was very strong. But instead they turned in Nigel's arms and kissed his cheek.

"How about you have a bath, clean your teeth, and then we'll snuggle in bed and watch a movie. And whatever happens happens." Grigg suggested, holding themselves back slightly from Nigel. Enough to make the hint more than clear.

"Are you saying I stink darling? Is that the issue?" Nigel grinned, tightening his arms around Grigg. "If I rub my stink all over you, you'll have to have a bath too."

"Nigel," Grigg laughed and affectionately pushed him away. Nigel smiled and kissed Grigg's cheek.

I love you.

For a moment they were caught in silence, a quiet pleasure humming between them at the little domestic playfulness. Grigg wondered if Nigel also felt it, that sense of what a future together might be for them. How easy this thing was between them.

How close Grigg was to saying I love you.

"I'll run the bath," Grigg finally said.

*

Nigel hummed against Grigg's skin, nuzzling into Grigg's balls as the week's worth of stubble scratched their inner thighs. It wasn't quite long enough to have reached the softness of a beard, and that much was clear when Grigg jumped and winced.

"Too rough," Grigg said before relaxing back into the pillows again.

"I can shave if you like darling?" Nigel offered with a smile, anticipating the response.

Which was a quick and certain, "No! I mean… No, it's ok. It's just a bit rough on my thighs I… I like…"

Nigel grinned, watching Grigg's cheeks turn pink and their dick throb. Nigel knew his darling Gigi liked the feel of stubble against their own, liked to nuzzle against it. Another week or two and it would be soft enough that they might not mind it so much between their thighs either.

Nigel hummed again and moved his attention to Grigg's cock.

“So fucking beautiful,” He muttered before licking up it and then sinking his mouth down on it.

Grigg had wanted him to take it easy, but truth was Nigel was going a little crazy and his balls were uncomfortably full, even if that was just in his head. They felt like fucking watermelons between his legs. So when Grigg had said maybe they should take his temperature before they got up to anything, Nigel insisted on using Grigg’s cock as a thermometer.

“Nigel,” Grigg moaned his name and it sounded like fucking music.

I love you, I fucking love you.

The words caught somewhere in Nigel’s chest. He wanted so desperately to say them, but he was terrified of scaring Grigg away. Sometimes he’d forgotten that those words hadn’t been said, and when he remembered he felt a jolt of fear that saying them would break whatever this was.

Even after everything. He was so sure Grigg loved him too but it wasn’t worth the risk.

“Nigel…” Another moan as Nigel worked Grigg’s cock with his mouth and fondled Grigg’s balls.

“Come on gorgeous…” Nigel nuzzled the words against them before swallowing their cock down again. He reached a hand between his own legs, starting to pump his cock in time with his slow, languid sucks.

The rhythm became faster and Nigel took Grigg deep to the back of his throat, wanting to taste everything Grigg had to offer.

When he swallowed around the Grigg’s glans, he felt them trying not to thrust up into his mouth. But he hummed again, trying to encourage until Grigg began to move. Not sharply, no real leverage behind it, but enough to start hitting the back of Nigel’s throat.

“Oh god… fuck…” Grigg muttered, clearly trying not to writhe in pleasure as they hit the back of Nigel’s throat again and again. And Nigel continued to suck and swallow and run a hand over Grigg’s ball and taint and down to their puckered opening.

Nigel moved his hand down, holding his cock with the other hand as he ran a finger into his own precome, smearing it as much as he could before moving it back up and slipping it into Grigg’s hole.

He continued to bob his head, meeting each of Grigg’s little thrusts as he slowly but steadily pushed his finger into Grigg as they whined and sobbed.

It only took a few strokes over Grigg’s prostate for them to come hard, right down the back of Nigel’s throat. He continued to swallow, taking it all down and just managing not to gag. He continued sucking Grigg through the orgasm until Grigg whined and pushed at him a little.

Nigel grunted, a hand still on his cock, he pulled back and moved up onto his knees, scooting forward until he was completely between Grigg's legs. He bit at his lower lip as he sped up his jerking, wet sounds filling the room along with his grunts as he brought himself to climax.

Grigg gasped as Nigel came, stroking himself through it as his come splattered across Grigg's stomach and chest.

Grigg smiled up at him as he tried to catch his breath.

"I feel like you just marked your territory," Grigg laughed even as they were still trying to catch their breath.

Nigel chuckled, panting, before collapsing on top of Grigg and smearing the come between them.

"Is that a problem?" Nigel joked, even though it felt nothing like a joke. Grigg didn't answer, just hummed and stroked their hands up and down Nigel's back before leaning in to kiss him.

I love you. I love you.

*

Nigel woke wrapped around Grigg.

It felt good. So good. It felt right. It was everything.

He took a moment to let his heart swell as he just breathed in Grigg's scent.

Nigel was feeling better. Not completely better, but well enough. Maybe well enough that Grigg could stop playing nurse. Which he hated the thought of.

This week had felt so good, waking with them every morning, even if he had felt under the weather. He had savoured every moment of it.

He let out a deep breath against Grigg's neck, trying not to chuckle at the responding little snuffle Grigg made in their sleep. So fucking cute.

Nigel tightened his grasp, holding on for dear life, it felt.

The idea of Grigg leaving and going back to that big house all on their own when they could stay here and wake next to Nigel every day ran through his head. Along with the knowledge that maybe Grigg didn't want that. Maybe Grigg wanted to be back in their own place and have their own space. Even if that did make his heart clench. There seemed to be something going on that Grigg hadn't entirely revealed and Nigel understood that everything had been consumed by his being sick.

But he made a note, he was going to talk to Grigg before letting them leave - find out what it was that seemed to have Grigg so concerned still, because it hadn't gone away even as Nigel had got better. Whatever it was, he'd be there for Grigg, whatever was needed.

Never had he felt more desperately that he didn’t want Grigg to go.

“I love you,” Nigel muttered against Grigg’s skin.

Grigg snuffled again but didn’t wake up.

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Grigg's career takes a turn, Nigel's there with moral support in and out of the bedroom.

Grigg looked in the mirrored window into the conference hall and felt a little flutter of something between excitement and anxiety. This had been Nigel's idea but it was a good one, that Grigg had acted upon it.

Before Grigg left Nigel's place, he had poked until Grigg explained what had happened with some of the clients. After Nigel had finished swearing, he'd assured Grigg everything would be fine.

And then he had apparently spent the rest of his recovery time before returning to work, writing down ideas and researching possibilities online.

This had started with looking up sci-fi conventions. Grigg wasn't sure whether it was because Nigel had actually enjoyed their time at the last convention or because he was angling for more costumed fun. In all honesty, Grigg was delighted by the idea of both. But it turned out that hadn't been Nigel's focus at all.

From showing Grigg the advertisement for stall holders, to where they were today, things had been surreal. Somehow it had spiralled over a very short month into Grigg hosting a talk at the convention about home robotics.

It had been their hobby for many years, and complimented their career in tech support nicely. Hosting a session that was essentially advertising their business as tech support to hobbyist robot engineers was not something ever planned for the company. But it made sense and Grigg loved the idea of it. Of combining both things and giving them more time to indulge in their hobby. And if it meant more business for the company, that was awesome.

The only thing holding them back was their nerves over putting themselves out publicly like this. It was something that would likely have been daunting anyway.Grigg wasn't dumb to how hard it could be for trans and non-binary people. Anyone not "presenting" in an expected way. They had already felt the effect of that just from changing their email signature. But that was all the more reason to do it, was Grigg's view. They had to do this.

They were wearing their usual wardrobe, an androgynous look in muted business colours. Their name tag had their name and beneath it they had added in sharpie "they/them". Feeling at first like that was one way to tackle it head on, rather than constantly explain.

The walk from picking up the name tag in reception, through to the conference hall of the hotel, had been nerve wracking. There were people milling about, waiting for everything to start. No one seemed to be paying them any attention, but they knew that would all change once the event was underway and there would be chances to interact and network.

Once they read their name tag.

Grigg looked through the door at the back of the room into where they would be hosting the session. It was already filling up with people. More than they thought would be interested in hearing anything they had to say. It should have been encouraging, but if anything Grigg was thinking how much easier it would have been to give a presentation than to do this almost workshop session.

They had provided basic supplies, which had been covered in the entry costs, back when they'd thought that this sounded like a great idea. But now they were quickly realising that it really would have been less daunting just to stand up at the front on the little stage and do a presentation and not have to really interact.

Grigg took a breath as they heard them being announced by the host and then pushed through the door as they had been instructed. There was a polite and warm applause as everyone waited expectantly for Grigg to get to the stage.

Grigg took a deep breath as the host asked him a few questions by way of introduction first, before getting into the specifics of what they were going to be doing today. As Grigg talked they were aware of the low key excitement in the room as fifty or so people sat expectantly in their small groups - adults and children alike - waiting to be taught some of the basics of home robotics.

The enthusiasm that was clearly there, buoyed Grigg. In fact, by the time the questions were over and it was time for them to start the demonstration and then go around assisting each of the tables, they had forgotten almost all of their concerns.

*

Nigel waited nervously outside the room.

He could hear people inside laughing and talking. Cheering now and then as obviously someone got something to work.

He was sure he could hear Grigg's laugh here and there, and it did wonderful things to him.

Nigel cleared his throat, still feeling a bit of rawness. His chest ached a little and it was becoming harder to tell as the weeks passed, whether he still wasn't fully recovered from being sick, or it was just the way his heart yearned for Grigg every time they weren't sleeping over at his place.

They had been there for Nigel in a way he could never repay. He hadn't had anyone look after him like that since he was a child, back with his family. Back a long fucking time ago,

really. The last time he'd ever really felt like he'd been loved in this sort of way and hadn't realised he'd missed or wanted it.

And Grigg had provided without question. As a partner would. As he wanted to for Grigg.

In truth, Nigel hadn't been strong enough initially to refuse the help. And then when he'd started to feel better, he hadn't wanted to refuse it. Grigg had practically moved in with him and it all felt so good. Just having them there like that. Someone who loved him.

Because it felt that way. It really did feel like Grigg loved him. And he just hoped that wasn't his own wishful thinking.

He heard more laughter and was sure it was Grigg. He wanted to be in the room, feeling that laughter running over him and into him, like he did when they were together. He wanted to be the only one to ever hear that joyous sound.

Nigel shooks his head and balled his fists.

He knew what he could be like. Obsessive, some might say. He loved hard and deep. And Grigg was the first person in his entire life that he hoped wouldn't be scared off by it. Nigel was a romantic at heart, but he was self aware enough to know he could take that to extremes if allowed.

"Always the fucking love…" Nigel muttered under his breath. It hadn't scared Grigg yet, in fact Grigg had already come back to him once.

Nigel allowed himself a little optimism in this suddenly deep headspace he'd found himself in. After their closeness, all this time together and how Grigg had doted on him and been there for him. It felt jarring to share him now.

Nigel huffed at how ridiculous he was, being jealous of a room full of strangers.

"Mr Ibanescu?" A young woman popped her head around the door, "Grigg's almost done, they asked if you wanted to come sit in on the end?"

Nigel was going to say no. He wanted to say no and not be a complete liability. But instead he was immediately on his feet and following her into the room.

A room that was lit by Grigg's amazing smile.

Grigg looked over at him and the smile widened. Nigel was about to look for somewhere to sit at the back, when Grigg gestured for him to join them.

"This is my boyfriend," Grigg told the table of ten robot building nerds. Grigg was beaming from ear to ear.

"Where did you get the charm?" One asked instantly, she looked in her twenties and half of her hair was blue.

“Excuse me?” Nigel asked, trying to work out if he’d heard her right. Maybe before Grigg, before these last few months, he’d have instantly had some come back about being born charming. But he was caught off guard and more than a little bewildered.

“This,” Grigg said, and Nigel realised Grigg was playing the little robot charm between their fingers as it hung on the cord around their neck. Nigel felt his stomach swoop at the idea of Grigg maybe wearing it for luck.

“Oh, um… I…” Nigel felt the colour rise in his cheeks, as the last minute just flashed back to him. Grigg calling him their boyfriend, the way they played with the charm. The fact that it must have also come up in conversation.

“If you leave me an email address I’ll get him to send you the link,” Grigg offered with a smile and the girl smiled warmly back.

“Thanks Gigi!” She said brightly, and Grigg gave a curt nod with their wide grin.

“Gigi,” Nigel muttered, slipping a hand around Grigg’s waist. It was natural and discreet, or at least no one seemed to notice or mention.

Grigg carried on talking, there with Nigel’s hand on their waist as they instructed some of the younger ones at this table how to connect a couple of the pieces. Nigel had to admit it looked like fun, and he probably should have just taken part in the event.

He leaned over to get a better look as one kid managed to put it all together and gave a triumphant whoop that was met with encouragement all around the table.

Nigel smiled, so engrossed in the fun that he didn’t realise that Grigg was pressing closer to him until he felt soft lips on his cheek.

“Don’t worry, I’ll give you a private lesson,” Grigg muttered into his ear.

Nigel shuddered and kissed Grigg’s cheek in return, not wanting to risk impropriety by making out with his lover. His partner.

“You guys are so cute, it’s almost gross,” The blue haired girl made a face with her words, and Grigg laughed.

*

It had been a long day and he hadn’t really done anything! Bev Katz from Grigg’s company had been on their stall all day. A few of Grigg’s home made robots on display along with the leaflets they’d had printed about the robotics support. She had looked exhausted and there were barely any leaflets left when they joined her after the workshop.

Nigel felt some affection for the woman, for all of Grigg’s team really. They had all been enthused about this stupid idea Nigel had had whilst half high on medication. And all had thrown their support behind Grigg.

They had gone back to Grigg's place as it was closer to the convention, and Nigel was fine with that. He liked being at Grigg's place.

Whilst Grigg being at his place felt like home, there was something he loved about being amongst Grigg's things. Being one of Grigg's things. Hopefully one that Grigg liked as much as his grease fueled car or the robots on the mantle.

They dropped their bags at the door and lumbered up the stairs to the master bedroom. Nigel flopped down on the bed, expecting Grigg to see the same, but realised they were just standing at the edge of the bed.

"You okay gorgeous?" Nigel asked, concerned.

It had been a long day and Grigg had done so well. They had really been amazing, Nigel thought, and had seemed to have a great time.

"I'm… exhausted," Grigg said, beaming all the same. "But also completely wired. I feel so energised right now!"

Nigel could see the truth of that in their eyes. The day had gone so well. Not just the interest at the stall, nor the fun at the workshop, Nigel knew. A lot of it was down to how Grigg had been treated. The one person who had misgendered them, Grigg had told Nigel on the way home, was another stall holder, and the moment he'd seen Grigg's pronoun badge, he had corrected himself. Not made a big deal of it, just continued and changed any reference to Grigg's pronouns from then on.

Nigel had been so happy to hear about it.

Grigg needed this positive experience after the last few weeks. As much as he cared for Grigg, as well as others in Grigg's life - his friends and family. They could all only support Grigg so much. Positive interactions with strangers was what Grigg needed in order to bounce back from some of the shit they had been through.

"You want to go for a bike ride?" Nigel suggested with no intention of joining Grigg, and unable to resist adding, "You know I always love how you look in lycra."

"Yeah?" Grigg blushed with the words. Which was odd. More of a blush than Nigel expected given the silly throw away comment.

"Always," Nigel answered, his voice coming out more of a rasp than intended.

"Wait here…" Grigg replied quickly and yet a little hesitantly, before moving to the wardrobe. Nigel tried to see what they were doing but could only make out a bag being grabbed before they headed into the bathroom.

Nigel had started to nod off when Grigg returned. He had no idea how long it had been, and certainly hadn't intended to start to fall asleep, but it really had been a long day and he certainly wasn't as buzzed as Grigg was. He'd actually started to consider that Grigg really shouldn't have more than four coffees a day, maximum!

“Sir?”

Grigg’s voice was tentative and Nigel’s eyes fluttered open as he felt the bed dip next to him.

“Fuck…” Nigel let out a long breath, his eyes roaming over Grigg. His fucking gorgeous Grigg.

They were dressed in what Nigel could only describe as a lycra catsuit. But there was more to it than that. It had contouring that made it look incredibly feminine though there weren’t exactly the curves to round it out. And there was an insignia and other details that Nigel knew meant something though he wasn’t sure what. One of those science fiction series that Grigg liked. The look was completed by some very subtle makeup.

He really was going to have to start paying more attention to these things. Because Grigg looked hot.

“Grigg…” Nigel breathed the name and started to reach forward, but Grigg hushed him and pushed him back onto the bed.

“Don’t worry, Sir. We’re taking good care of you. We’ll get you better.” Grigg said softly, stroking Nigel’s hair back from his forehead.

Nigel trembled.

“Yeah?” He clocked the blue-green bits of the uniform and it rang a distant bell as being something sciency or medical. Simultaneously making mental notes to log into whatever streaming service was airing this show.

“Yes Sir,” Grigg smiled and leaned in, brushing their lips lightly together. Just enough of a press to leave Nigel wanting more.

When Nigel tried to move forward to continue the kiss, Gigi retreated and looked away, bashful.

“I’m sorry Sir, I shouldn’t have…”

Nigel let out a trembling breath. So that’s how this was going to play out.

“You’ve taken such good care of me,” Nigel’s words came out gruff. “I can’t tell you how much I’ve appreciated it.” Nigel meant every word.

“Just doing my job sir,” Grigg said quietly.

“Above and beyond if you ask me…” Nigel replied, he reached again, putting his hands on Grigg’s hips and pulling them closer, close enough to nuzzle into their neck.

Grigg gasped, hands pushing against Nigel but not enough to part them.

“We shouldn’t Sir, fraternisation isn’t-” Grigg started. Nigel cut them off with a kiss, pulling back to breath words against their lips.

“Do you want me to make it an order?”

Grigg groaned against his mouth and then moved, straddling Nigel’s hips and then groaning again when they felt how hard Nigel was already.

“Just keep quiet, gorgeous,” Nigel whispered conspiratorially and pushed his hips up.

Grigg whimpered and nodded, “Yes Sir, anything for you.”

It sounded like something out of some cheesy sixties movie, but the way Grigg said it had Nigel groaning not laughing.

Grigg looked around furtively, as though they might be discovered at any moment in this empty house. Or medical bay, or whatever it was Grigg wanted to make believe.

“We have to be quick Sir,” Grigg was panting heavily as they spoke.

“Yeah, yeah…” Nigel agreed, getting into the whole scenario and loving it. Loving how Grigg loved this sort of shit.

He ran his hands over the lycra, not finding even one little hint of a zipper or buttons. But before he could voice his frustration, Grigg leaned forward and took his mouth, kissing him hungrily as they rut against him.

Okay, this was how it was going to be. Grigg was going to make him come in his pants and he had no problem with that at all. He took hold of Grigg’s hips and moved his lover against him, their hard lengths pressing together through their clothing.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful,” Nigel moaned when Grigg pulled back slightly.

“Call me Gigi, Sir.” Grigg said, totally into the character of the sweet nurse or whatever, pleasuring the ship’s captain, or whoever. Nigel wasn’t sure he needed all the details to come.

Especially when Grigg reached back and took hold of what must have been the zipper, pulling it down for enough to shrug out of the top half of the skin tight suit.

“Gigi, fuck…” Nigel breathed the words, using his grasp on Grigg’s hips to bring them completely forward until he was able to lean up and lick over Grigg’s now exposed right nipple.

“Oh yes Sir,” Grigg moaned, leaning forward as they worked their hips, body arching so that Nigel could lick and suck at Grigg’s nipples whilst they continued to grind against each other.

“I’m so close Sir, I’ve wanted you for so long…” Grigg whimpered.

“Yeah gorgeous?” Nigel growled, resting his forehead against Grigg’s chest as they continued to thrust against each other and into the friction they were creating between them. “You hot for all the senior officers?”

He had no idea where the words came from, but apparently it was fucking perfect, because Grigg groaned and their hips stuttered.

“N-no Sir, just you… Always you…” Grigg near whispered as they moved harder and faster, gripping the head of the bed as leverage.

“Fuck, darling, I’m gonna-” Nigel cried out before he could finish the words. The sight of Grigg riding him was more than enough to drive him over the edge. And Grigg didn’t stop, they continued to move against Nigel until he felt them shudder too, savouring the little cry of agonised pleasure as Grigg spilled inside the lycra, a damp patch immediately forming.

“Holy fuck, Gigi…” Nigel breathed the words, panting as Grigg collapsed on his chest. “That was fucking wild darling.”

“You’re welcome Captain.” Grigg’s words were slurred with exhaustion, and Nigel wasn’t entirely sure either of them would be getting cleaned up before they drifted off to sleep.

*

It had been a long weekend.

Between the convention and Nigel staying over, Grigg was ready for their Monday morning coffee from Salim and Ifrit’s. It was just a shame they didn’t have time to enjoy it at the shop and had to head straight to the office, given that they had already overslept a little.

Usually, Grigg tried to get in slightly earlier than everyone else, to set an example and let them know how hard they worked. Jimmy was already in and Brian was arriving just as they did, Katz would be forgiven for rolling in later.

Brian and Grigg took their seats in the office as Jimmy leaned against the spare desk. He usually disappeared into the workshop first thing, but he stood there, his own coffee in hand and waited expectantly.

“So…” Jimmy started, “How did the convention go?”

“Great,” Grigg replied, trying to downplay it. Personally they’d had an amazing time, but whilst almost every last leaflet had been taken and Bev reported some real good interest, it was the results that mattered.

“Holy shit!” Brian’s exclamation startled Jimmy and Grigg, both turning to look at Zeller.

His jaw dropped as he turned to look at them, the email inbox loading up on the screen behind him with what had to be close to fifty new emails.

“These…” Zeller turned back to the screen. “Like… ninety percent of these are follow ups from the convention.”

“Wow!” Jimmy pushed off the desk and went over to read over Zeller’s shoulder. After a stunned moment Grigg did the same.

Zeller started scanning through them in the side viewing panel, “This one is asking about setting up a support account with us… there are two… no, three, that are asking whether you’re interested in running more workshops. Fuck…” Zeller carried on scrolling. “Some of this is little stuff, but… added up. If these people are all serious about wanting some sort of tech support…” Zeller was still reading. “Fuck, Grigg…”

He pulled one of the emails up on his screen, to fill the whole area for Grigg to read.

“Oh… oh my…” The email was from the convention centre, saying their tech support contract was up soon and inviting Grigg’s company to tender.

“If we land that…” Zeller started.

Jimmy whooped and punched the air with the hand not holding coffee.

“We might not,” Grigg reasoned.

“Grigg… we might. Clearly we’re halfway there. They must have liked you and… look…” Zeller scrolled a bit and then highlighted a section with his mouse. It made a point of explaining the convention centre supported diversity and preferred to go with companies of a diverse nature, where at all possible.

“Not everyone hates us,” Jimmy grinned. And Grigg had to grin back.

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Life is beautiful, and then Gabi shows up...

Grigg woke against Nigel's chest, taking a moment to nuzzle against the soft hair before letting out a sigh. Grigg loved waking this way, he loved that Nigel was staying over more and more. Loved that some of Nigel's things had started to migrate to his house.

Loved Nigel.

Grigg's heart swelled on the sigh and he pressed the words against Nigel's chest, "I love you…" Not sure if it was too soon to say them when the man was awake. Grigg drifted back off to sleep.

When they woke again, Nigel's arms were around them, holding them tight, though the man appeared to still be asleep. In fact he was, to the point that Grigg had to extricate themself in order to get out to the bathroom.

It was Sunday, a lazy day for them and they had no plans. Grigg anticipated a day spent in bed, just as they used to back when they had first started seeing each other.

They had just turned off the shower, wrapping a towel around them, when they were sure they could hear Nigel talking. Grigg tentatively re-entered the bedroom and saw that Nigel was on his phone, frowning and groggy.

"Slow down… Where are you?" Nigel's words came out gruff. Not angry, but certainly concerned and made deeper by the remnants of sleep. "It's okay… Yes, I'll come… Gabi just, stay where you are and I'll get you."

Grigg blinked, his stomach dropping at the words.

Gabi? Nigel's ex wife back from Romania? What could she possibly want?

Nigel looked up at Grigg, almost pained to see they had heard the conversation.

"It's my ex. She's in trouble. Her new husband he… they broke up and she's stuck here in the States. She has nowhere else to go." Nigel growled the words, clearly not entirely comfortable with the situation, but Grigg understood. After everything Gabi went through with him, how could he refuse to help her. Grigg would never ask him not to.

So Grigg nodded and sat on the bed.

“Where is she? Grigg asked softly.

“The airport, she just flew in. The next flight she was able to book for Bucharest isn’t for four days. Can I borrow your car?” Nigel asked, tentatively.

“Of course,” Grigg smiled. “You want me to come with you?”

Nigel shook his head, “No I… I haven’t seen her in years. She got my number from a friend back home who told her I was living over here and… I need to talk to her. She can stay at my apartment, maybe I can stay here?” Nigel was playing his phone over in his hands, trying to work it all out and obviously concerned about how Grigg was going to react to it all.

And Grigg wasn’t really sure. There was no animosity toward Gabi, and Nigel had explained what happened between them. If anything Grigg could understand why Nigel might feel he should do all he could for the woman. Grigg didn’t feel threatened, but they did feel something.

They couldn’t quite put their finger on it.

It was a sort of anxiousness. This was someone Nigel knew from years before, from not as liberal a country. And whilst Gabi had accepted Nigel being gay, what would her response be to their situation? This could be a very uncomfortable few days.

*

How the fuck a car was endearing was beyond Nigel. And yet as he drove into the city, in an old banger that he was sure might break down at any moment, he couldn’t help but feel a swell of love for Grigg.

It was a weird sensation to have whilst driving to pick up his ex wife.

Gabi was a wonderful woman, and he had treated her badly. He could hardly refuse the call for help. But even so, he had never banked on seeing her again. Her knowing that he was gay, was not the same as her witnessing his life - words and actions were not the same thing. And whilst he was sure she would be nice enough, he wanted to keep her completely separate from the life he’d built in the US. She was firmly in his past, along with closeted Nigel and thug Nigel.

It was a past he didn’t want to let bleed into his present.

Nigel was nervous by the time he pulled the car into the pick up bay and looked up to see Gabi. She hardly looked any different at all, other than her hair being a different colour - brunette now. She had only a large backpack and violin case with her, and wore a saddened expression. Even so it brightened almost into a small smile when she saw Nigel.

“Hello gorgeous,” Nigel said softly as he got out of the car and stepped around to her. She threw herself into a hug immediately, squeezing him tight and breathing out a sigh of relief.

“Thanks Nigel, I owe you one.” She sighed the words against him, giving him another squeeze before stepping back and looking at him. “You look totally the same and completely

different at the same time. And more tanned." She grinned. "Are you happy?"

"Yeah," He couldn't help the smile, immediately thinking of Grigg when she said happy. "I have a good life here. I'm sorry things haven't worked out the same for you."

She nodded and bit at her lower lip, looking away for a moment, trying to hide her emotions.

Nigel cleared his throat and picked up her bags, stowing them in the trunk before turning back to find her smirking at the car.

"Interesting vehicle,"

He returned her grin. "It basically runs on donut grease. It's not mine, it's um… my partner's."

Nigel felt odd saying the words to her, never expecting to be in the situation of discussing any significant other with his ex wife.

"Oh," She replied, a resigned sound. She nodded her head and he came around and opened the door, letting her slide in before he got back behind the wheel.

They drove in silence and Gabi fell asleep almost the entire way, waking as he turned off the engine outside his place.

"We're here," Nigel said. "You can stay here until you need to get back to the airport. I can drive you back whenever you need."

"I appreciate this," Gabi replied as Nigel got out of the car and pulled out her bags. He waited for her to follow before heading up to his apartment and letting them in. He handed her the key before closing the door behind them.

"Kitchen's there. Bathroom through there," He pointed. "Bedroom is that way, I cleaned it up and changed the sheets. You keep hold of that key. I have a spare. I'm going to stay with Grigg and-"

"Grigg? Your partner?" Gabi interrupted, her tone flat.

Nigel nodded, "Yeah."

"And you're happy?" She asked again immediately, giving him a hard look that he knew so well. It wasn't a judgement, more suspicion than anything. He was sure she'd never doubted that he was gay, but he well understood her doubting that he could be happy, settled. In love.

For Nigel, love was an obsession, and as much as he had wanted to feel that way for her, he hadn't. And he knew that there was a time, back in the beginning, that she hoped he would. He had just acted the part, been the jealous husband. Pushed her away with his shitty behaviour. Behaviour he had been terrified he'd repeat with Grigg but so far hadn't.

"Really happy. Disgustingly so, in fact." Nigel said gently. "In love." There was no point lying to her.

She let out a heavy sigh. A lament, he could tell. He knew her well enough to know that. Whilst they had divorced and she'd met that asshole Charlie, and started a new life over the same as he had - he knew there was regret there.

He felt it in the pit of his stomach, along with the guilt and self-hate over the lies he told her and made her live.

It took effort but she nodded and smiled softly. "I'm glad. Really. I wasn't sure if you could ever find any kind of peace and happiness. But you seem… well, and good. Happy."

Nigel nodded, slightly uncomfortable at how awkward things had become.

"I'm sorry," Gabi breathed out the words, clearly reading his expression. "I'm just curious. After… everything." She used her arms to gesture at her situation and he felt another pang of guilt. Here he was diving head first into the happiest time of his life, and she was going back to Romania because she finally realised what a douchebag Charlie really was.

"It's okay," He shrugged and silence fell between them.

"This is weird, I shouldn't have called you." Gabi said, wringing her fingers and looking away.

"Of course you should have. After everything, I owe you…" Nigel started, realising quite how deep their past sat within him. It had been an important turning point in his life, one that had - eventually - brought him to Grigg.

Gabi shook her head, "No, Nigel. You don't owe me anything. We weren't right for each other at the end of the day. And… We broke up before you came out. I left you. Remember?" She tried to keep her tone light.

And he did remember. He always knew that. But he also knew that she left because of who he was and how he treated her. And so much of that was to do with his being closetted.

"I treated you badly," Nigel insisted. "I'll always owe you for that."

She gave him that hard look again before a curt, accepting nod. Agree to disagree perhaps, or maybe she really did accept his culpability. He hoped so. He wanted to be someone who was worthy of Grigg, and the old Nigel wasn't. He still wasn't even sure if he deserved them, but making amends where he could was at least one way to be a better person.

"What was that look?" Gabi asked, bringing him back to the here and now and away from daydreaming about Grigg. Gabi's face broke into a warm smile. One that he hadn't seen on her for a very long time.

"Huh?" Nigel replied, trying to brush it off, even though she clearly noted his cheeks heating a little.

"Oh my god. Nigel, are you blushing? Are you thinking about your boyfriend?" Gabi was suddenly that bright and vibrant musician he had met all those years ago. Someone he had hoped he could love and failed her miserably. So how could he deny her answers now?

“Yeah… Um. Well… Not my boyfriend as such…” Nigel started fumbling for words. He hadn’t meant to say any of this. Hadn’t meant to bring Grigg into it beyond the perfunctory, let alone have actual conversations about his love life.

“You said partner, are you not… together? Is it like… complicated?” Gabi’s eyebrows drew together in both confusion and concern.

Nigel shook his head, “No… it’s all… Everything is great. Uncomplicated actually.” Nigel huffed a chuckle at those words for the truth in them. Despite how crazy things had gone for a while, now they really were uncomplicated and easy. They were beautiful.

His heart swelled with love for Grigg, along with a sudden urge to tell them.

“Then what…”

“He’s not a he… um, no that came out wrong,” Nigel’s mouth went dry at Gabi’s wide eyes. She actually looked a little shaken and he realised immediately he’d chosen the wrong words. “Grigg is… They are genderqueer.”

“I… I don’t know what that means,” Gabi frowned at him and Nigel could feel some anger there with her confusion.

He understood, it wasn’t like Grigg’s situation hadn’t been in the back of his mind for a while.

“They identify as genderfluid, um… kinda both. Sometimes they are more masculine, other times more feminine…” Nigel didn’t realise how hard it would be to explain this to someone with very little exposure to the queer community. He had even more empathy than before for the struggles Grigg went through with it.

“I don’t… like a crossdresser?” She pressed, her face heating. Nigel clenched his jaw. She was likely getting pissed about the whole thing. He could already feel her reasoning. How could he have been gay, how could their marriage been such an issue if he wanted to be with a man who dressed like a woman.

“No… Not like that. Not in the way you mean. Grigg is… You know some people are transgender, there is a disconnect between their biological sex and their gender identity. Grigg gets dysphoria, a real deep problem with how they feel in their own skin. And the way it is for them is that… sometimes they are more comfortable presenting feminine, exploring their femininity. And other times masculine. Most of the time they are fairly androgynous-”

“What the fuck are you even talking about, Nigel?” Gabi seemed to not even be trying to take in what he was saying, and he was tempted just to tell her to google it. She continued, starting to pace and clearly uncomfortable, “So you like women? You’re not gay. Or… Should I have just bought a dildo and fucked you up the ass? Is that all you wanted?”

He’d been dreading those words, from anyone. But hearing them from his ex-wife was particularly hard.

“Fuck, Gabi no!” He raised his voice. Something he hated doing these days. When she kept pacing he grabbed her arms and held her in front of him. “I’m fucking gay. And I know I can never apologise enough for what I put you through but nothing changes that.”

“How can you be fucking gay?” She growled the parroted words at him, angry now. The angriest he’d ever seen her.

“Because it isn’t that fucking simple, gorgeous.” His tone started harsh and he tried to bring it down, ending with a heavy sigh. “Because sexuality and gender aren’t that fucking simple. I fell in love with Grigg. I am in love with Grigg. And I don’t totally get it either. And I don’t know if it comes down to genitalia or physicality I just… Grigg is both and I even fucking like their femininity. It fucking turns me on. And maybe I’m not as gay as I thought, maybe it’s just Grigg. I don’t know. But please Gabi, never think for one minute that I wouldn’t have made it work between us if I was straight.”

“This is all fucking confusing. I don’t need this right now.” She shrugged his hands off her and shook her head.

He let her go, “Yeah, you’re right. I’m sorry. I should have… explained it better or…” He actually wasn’t sure what he could have done differently so he left it at that. “Go get some rest, you’ve got my number if you need anything over the next couple of days. Otherwise I’ll come collect you for your flight.”

She nodded, not looking at him. So he turned and left.

*

When Nigel got back to the house, Grigg could immediately feel the tension.

“Nigel?” They pulled him to sit next to them on the sofa, an arm around him. “What happened. Was everything okay?”

Grigg knew enough of Nigel’s past with Gabi, and was sure it had to be hard on both of them to see each other again. She must have been desperate for help if she resorted to calling Nigel. Grigg’s heart went out to her.

“She.. got upset.” Nigel said, his voice a little shaky.

“Nigel…” Grigg breathed his name gently and pulled him closer, until Nigel was practically wrapped around Grigg, his nose in their hair.

“Nothing I didn’t deserve. Just… She asked about you. And I explained it wrong I guess. She’s upset, after everything, that I could be with someone that… she thinks I’m not gay if I’m with you.”

Grigg’s breath stilled and they had to admit this was something that had come to mind more than once. Whether one day, they would be too fluid for their gay boyfriend.

“Darling…” Nigel whimpered the word and pulled Grigg tighter, having realised they had stilled at the words. “It doesn’t matter. Your gender doesn’t matter to me. And maybe that

makes me not gay, I don't know. But it makes me not gay just for you. Not for Gabi or anyone else. And if…" Nigel hesitated and Grigg knew how hard he was working to choose the right words. "I need you to tell me if it's a problem for you. I can only tell you that I see you as you. As genderfluid and beautiful no matter what."

The fact was, right or wrong, Nigel wouldn't have been attracted to Grigg in the first place if they hadn't presented as male. Had a male body. Had a penis.

It wasn't a new realisation, but it was one that Grigg had hoped to avoid lingering on. Because whilst all that was true and there was a sting to it, Nigel could have left at any time. When they were still casual, or when they met again at the coffee shop, and any time since then. Nigel could have said he couldn't do this. And he never had.

Grigg shook their head, "It's okay… I understand. I get it."

Nigel let out a little sob into Grigg's hair, pulling them as close as possible without squeezing the life out of them.

"You're everything to me Grigg. I…" Nigel trailed off as his phone rang.

Grigg felt their whole body tense and flutter, wondering what Nigel was about to say and cursing the phone that stopped him.

Nigel took it out of his pocket and looked at Grigg with some sadness, "It's Gabi," He said before standing and answering, walking through to the kitchen.

Grigg bit at their lower lip.

"I love you, Nigel. I love you." Grigg said quietly, barely even able to hear themselves. They wanted to say it. They wanted to tell him and hear it in return, so sure that was what Nigel had been about to say.

And maybe it was too soon and maybe it wasn't. And maybe Grigg couldn't entertain the idea of ever living without Nigel. Maybe that was because the man was so deep inside them, he was now part of Grigg's heart and soul.

However it had happened, however they had got here. Grigg loved Nigel and never wanted to be parted again.

Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Misunderstandings, manipulations and love confessions... FINALLY

Chapter Notes

The final chapter will be posting on 7th November <3

Nigel hadn’t slept well.

Gabi had called to apologise, saying she still didn’t quite get it, but that it wasn’t any of her business either way. And whilst he agreed on some levels, he also hadn’t wanted her to be upset by it all.

He just shouldn’t have mentioned anything. It played on his mind all night and it was a wonder he had made it to work on time. It had been near impossible to drag himself out of bed.

Work was going to be tough, so he made the decision to swing by Grigg’s office and take them for lunch. Just the perk up he'd need.

The more time they spent together, the more time Nigel wanted to give to Grigg. Maybe it was that honeymoon phase thing, but the idea of not working in the same building as Grigg and not being able to steal moments here and there just to say hello, made Nigel ache.

When his lunch break finally rolled around, Nigel grabbed his stash of takeout menus, planning for them to order something and make a picnic on the grass out back of the office building. But when he arrived at Grigg’s office his partner was nowhere to be seen.

“Hello?” Nigel called out. The door to the workshop opened and jimmy popped his head out.

“Hello handsome,” Jimmy grinned playfully, “If you’re looking for Grigg, they said they had errands to run at lunch and might be back late.”

“Oh. Okay… Thanks Jimmy.” Nigel gave a nod before heading back to his own office. It was strange Grigg hadn’t mentioned anything about errands or taking a long lunch. That was just the kind of mundane stuff that came up over breakfast usually.

Nigel had a sudden thought, and his heart clenched.

*

Grigg took a breath and knocked on the door. They had considered taking Nigel's key and letting themselves in, on the ruse of having left something there and not realising Gabi would be in. And perhaps she wouldn't be. But that felt both cowardly and intrusive, and all around unfair. Arguably this whole thing was unfair on her. And Grigg knew they should probably stay away, but they also felt like the air needed to be cleared. Because they couldn't stand the thought of Nigel having the way this reunion ended weigh on him.

They waited, just wondering if they should knock again when the door opened.

"Hi, um, Nigel isn't here right now." Gabi said, looking a little uncomfortable. Her expression causing Grigg to rethink any ideas they'd had about how to handle this.

"I know," Grigg smiled and held out their hand to shake, "I'm Grigg."

She took their hand automatically, shaking it even as her jaw clenched and colour rose on her cheek. Embarrassment it would seem, and Grigg was happy to believe that to be the case unless given cause to think that it was something more negative.

"Come to check out the ex?" She asked, only a little snarky as their hands fell from each other.

Grigg's smile didn't falter, "Actually, I thought you might like to go to lunch. I have some time and figured you might not have had the chance to check out some of the local area yet".

Gabi eyed them, not quite suspicious but at least a little wary.

Grigg raised their hands in placation, "Or we can order in if you prefer. No ulterior motive here. I'd just… like to get to know you and have you get to know me. I… I want to reassure you to the best of my knowledge, that Nigel is happy. And gay...ish."

Gabi looked uncomfortable for a moment and then held open the door to let Grigg in.

"I need to grab my shoes and purse." She said.

"Of course," Grigg nodded and closed the door but remained by it rather than going further into the apartment. It was her space right now and they had no wish to intrude further.

When Gabi reappeared with a light cardigan and shoes, purse in hand, Grigg reopened the door and lead the way out. It was a short walk to the bar where Grigg and Nigel had attempted to have their first date. Way back before they were really dating.

Grigg knew they did light meals and that sort of Americanised tapas during the day, so it felt like a good option.

They found a table in the back, it was quiet and less busy than the bar area, where apparently some were taking a liquid lunch. Small talk on the way had mostly been weather and travel focused, but when they were looking over menus Gabi asked -

“So, you and Nigel. You’ve been together a while.”

It wasn’t a question and Grigg wasn’t sure if it was concern of jealousy in her tone. They considered that there might always been something sort off unresolved between Gabi and Nigel as he was never able to be who or what she needed. And with the recent breakup she had gone through, it was natural that she was looking for a rock through that and her mind was raking over the possibility of Nigel and what might have been. Of course she’d been confused and upset when she found out about Grigg. If they identified as a cis male this would likely have been different. There would have been no question and this would all have just stayed in her head.

“Sort of. On and off or… well, it started out more casual. And then we didn’t see each other for a few months, before deciding to start seriously dating,” Grigg answered as honestly as felt appropriate.

“Did he… Did he have issues with… your gender thing? Is that why it was on and off?” Her face heated and Grigg wondered how much time she’d spent looking up stuff online since she saw Nigel.

Grigg shook their head, but even so answered, “No and yes. He… really didn’t have a problem with it. I was just starting to explore what it all was when we met. And it was an issue, but not for him. Only for me. I needed to work it all out before I felt comfortable being with someone. I was worried I wasn’t treating him well, and I guess I wasn’t. But he understood. And when we met up again, there was still that spark and we just…” Grigg shrugged.

Gabi nodded, despite frowning, the rest of her expression read as understanding. “It’s the love… it drives him crazy. He… He loves like an obsession. I thought he loved me like that for a while, before I started to see through it. A… sort of person suit. I guess that’s the case for closeted people. He was very good at it, fooled everyone, but then I got to know him better and saw him for who he was… is.”

“And that’s why you’re surprised about us…” Grigg offered.

“Yeah. I mean, I could tell from how he talked about you that he loves you. I know enough to see the real thing there.”

Grigg swallowed hard and felt their face heat. “He’s never said so… not in words…”

“Not yet.” There was a little smile on Gabi’s face when she said that, as though she couldn’t help it, and maybe even felt a little endeared.

“I haven’t either… but…”

“But you will.” Gabi finished.

Grigg flushed to the tip of their ears and gave a quick nod.

“I’m glad. I mean… he can be a shit. But I’m glad he’s happy.” Gabi said before looking back down at the menu, though she didn’t seem to be reading it. “I just… don’t get how he can be gay and be with you. How does that work?” She didn’t look back up, asking all this of the menu.

“Oh, um…” Grigg faltered for a moment, despite anticipating this question. The conversation hadn’t felt like it was going that way. “When we first met I guess I still identified as a cis man. I was just starting to question my gender. And Nigel was there for me through a lot of that. And maybe it might have been different, right or wrong, if we had met now instead. But then we got to know each other and I guess he liked me enough for it not to matter. In fact…” Grigg took a breath before continuing, not intending to get this personal but here it was. “He likes it if I’m feminine sometimes. He likes being with me no matter what gender I’m…”

Gabi nodded and frowned, not looking up. “Because you have a penis.”

Grigg winced. “I don’t… I don’t think it’s that simple. I think that sometimes sexuality is more fluid than that. Nigel is, for the all intents and purposes, a gay man. He is not attracted to cis women, but… people sometimes find the fluidity of their sexuality is perhaps not as rigid as they thought when it comes to genderqueer and non-binary people. People with a fluid gender. Straight people too. If you fell for someone who you thought was a guy but then they told you different...” Grigg shrugged, hoping it made sense.

She nodded but was still frowning. Even though it looked like she was mulling it over. For Grigg it made sense - otherwise genderqueer people would only ever be with other genderqueer people, or maybe bi and pan people. There was always going to be fluidity one way or another.

Gabi cleared her throat and then looked at Grigg as she said, "When I was a teenager, I was kind of in love with my best friend. A girl crush, you know?" When Grigg nodded, she continued “I mean… I’m not a lesbian. I’ve never been attracted to women, not really. But… I wanted to kiss her. I never did. We lost touch after school.”

Gabi looked away, a little forlorn, and Grigg let out a sigh.

“Yeah, I guess it’s like that. Sometimes you just like a person and nothing else matters. Not even their gender.” Grigg’s words were gentle and when Gabi looked back to them, she was smiling softly.

*

Nigel had a busy afternoon, but even if he hadn’t, he probably wouldn’t have gone and bothered Grigg. This wasn’t a conversation for the workplace.

And by the time Grigg got home, an hour after he did, Nigel was wound up tight. His jaw was clenching and he had to stop himself pacing the living room.

“Hey,” Grigg greeted him with a smile when they opened the door and saw Nigel there waiting. It was like this every day, despite the fact that Nigel hadn’t slept anywhere else for

weeks and Gabi was currently occupying his apartment. And even so it melted his heart. He was never going to not love how Grigg was so clearly happy to see him.

Nigel walked over and closed the door behind Grigg and then pulled them into a hug. He held on tight and breathed against Grigg's curls.

"What…" Grigg started but Nigel cut them off with a heavy sigh.

"Are you trying to give me a fucking heart attack, gorgeous?" Nigel growled, holding Grigg slightly tighter for just a moment before pulling back to look into their eyes.

He saw hurt and confusion there. Perhaps this hadn't been the right tack, but Grigg had fucking scared him. He didn't want Grigg getting hurt and the last he spoke to Gabi he wasn't sure what she'd say to them. Not least because she was clearly not okay and hating on Nigel. He didn't want Grigg getting the brunt of that.

"I wish you had told me you were going to see Gabi," Nigel sighed, changing his words at the last minute. He had intended to say he wished Grigg hadn't gone to see her at all, but that wasn't fair. He wasn't in control of Grigg's action and had no right to dictate anything, even if it made him uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry," Grigg replied, looking truly contrite. "I didn't want it to be a big issue. I just wanted to go chat with her, smooth things over. She's… She was your wife. You're both still important to each other and I didn't want that changed by my being in your life." Grigg explained, looking down.

Nigel took a deep breath and hooked his finger under Grigg's chin, raising it so that their eyes met again.

"I barely see her darling, only a handful of times since our divorce. And only this time since being in the US. You're right she was important to me, but… I don't want you to ever feel like…" Nigel shrugged, unsure how to continue.

I don't want you to feel like I don't love you.

I love you.

More than anyone, more than anything…

"You're important to me too," He finally continued, hating himself for the words and even more for the brief flash of disappointment in Grigg's eyes. Grigg surely had wanted him to say what they must both already know.

Nigel swallowed, "I…"

His heart was in his throat and the words were on the tip of his tongue…

"I'll make us some dinner," Nigel finally said, letting go of Grigg and starting towards the kitchen. Lamenting what a coward he was. Surely Grigg already knew. And maybe even loved him too. He was sure that was the case. But the thought of Grigg still not being ready

after their ups and downs in the past, made Nigel wonder if there would ever be a right time to say it. What if it was too much and Grigg backed off?

He'd rather not know and keep Grigg in his life, than risk saying he loved them and not hearing it back.

*

"I'm so sorry," Zeller repeated, still typing away at his computer as though it would resolve anything. It hadn't so far, and Zeller had been trying to resolve this since Grigg got back from their long lunch. It wouldn't easily be resolved, and that was fine. It just was what it was.

"Brian, it's okay. I'll go to San Francisco, Jimmy can do Sacramento." Grigg soothed.

"I fucked up," Zeller said, sitting back in his chair.

Grigg laughed, "Brian, you fucked up because we've been inundated with business interest and requests for meetings. It was bound to happen."

"Yeah," Brian chuckled too, "Very true. But maybe don't take long lunches in future. Or you could get me an assistant..."

There was a scald in his teasing and Grigg raised a brow at that, which only had Brian grinning and turning back to the computer.

Maybe he thought that Grigg had spent lunch with Nigel and was just being cheeky. Jimmy had mentioned he'd dropped by and it seems like it was assumed Nigel had found them. Grigg couldn't help their cheeks heating as he thought the team would really be able to tell if Nigel and they had been up to anything untoward at lunch. Grigg's hair would have been a mess, no doubt, and their cheeks would be burning - much like they were just from thinking about it.

It was the second this week and both times they'd been with Gabi. They liked her a lot and could see why Nigel had too. They were sorry for the pain she was in, and wished there was more that could be done. She just needed time, and to go home. This had been their last meeting, Nigel was taking her back to the airport that evening.

"Can you at least book my flights and a hotel?" Grigg asked with a tease in the tone.

Zeller chuckled again and nodded, pulling flight details up onto his screen. Grigg realised they'd have to leave early the next day in order to get everything sorted for the set up. Nigel wouldn't be back until late, and then would likely be up early. So Grigg would explain it all in the morning before catching the flight.

*

Nigel woke up, feeling somewhat unsettled by being in his apartment alone. He couldn't remember the last time he had spent the night without Grigg. Mostly at Grigg's house these days, but together nonetheless. He wouldn't have done it, had it not seemed like the best thing to do. Traffic had been terrible and it had been really late by the time he got back from taking

Gabi to the airport. So he had decided to stay at his own place and not wake Grigg. But he didn't like it, and selfishly wished he'd just gone home.

Home. Home with Grigg.

His heart panged.

Nigel turned off the alarm on his phone before opening his messages to text Grigg and let them know he would see them later. But before he had a chance to do anything, his phone battery died. Nigel cursed and searched for his charger, before realising that it was at Grigg's place.

"Damn," Nigel cursed and threw his phone onto the bed. He hated the thought of not even being able to contact Grigg. It made his stomach flip in an unpleasant way.

He let out a growl as he started to get ready for work, resolving that he'd just have to wait until he got there to see Grigg. And then, as soon as he got a chance, he'd pull Grigg into a quiet room and claim the morning kiss he missed out on.

That opportunity didn't arise.

Grigg's office seemed abuzz with Zeller sorting through all kinds of boxes of their convention materials, whilst Jimmy made none too subtle jabs at him. But there was no Grigg.

Nigel had left it an hour, wondering if Grigg would come to him, or maybe they might run into each other out in the building somewhere. By ten, Nigel was done waiting and decided he would take his morning kiss to Grigg.

Once he arrived and saw how busy things were he understood why Grigg hadn't come to find him. But now he was in Grigg's office…

"Where's the boss?" Nigel asked from the doorway.

The room went quiet and Zeller and Price both looked up at Nigel as though he were crazy.

"Grigg?" Jimmy asked, clearly confused.

"Yes. Your boss, Grigg." Nigel spoke slowly like Jimmy was stupid.

"He's gone." Jimmy replied, in a tone that indicated Nigel should already know this.

Nigel frowned. Jimmy frowned. Zeller looked between them.

"What do you mean 'gone'?" Nigel growled, on the verge of not taking much more of this shit. Not having his morning kiss from Grigg, was worse than not getting his morning coffee.

Jimmy waved a dismissive hand and went back to looking through boxes, "Well, I mean… They probably are on their way to the airport right now. I assumed they'd mention… Look,

they've been moping around here ever since your ex turned up and… Well, I guess it all got a bit much."

Jimmy trailed off then looked at Nigel. A pitying look.

Nigel's stomach sank. It didn't quite ring true. Didn't quite sound like how Grigg would handle things, especially given how they had reached out to Gabi the way they had. But Nigel's mind was already reeling ahead to imagining the worst, if Jimmy was right.

"Where is Grigg going? Do you know?" Nigel asked, a tremor of fear in his voice as his mind raced to try and understand why Grigg was leaving.

Jimmy let out a sympathetic sigh and gave Nigel a look to match.

"Grigg didn't really say just… that they needed a break. That things couldn't keep going on like this… I mean… I'm sure they were talking about the business not about…" Jimmy gave Nigel a meaningful look.

Zeller began coughing as though choking on something. Nigel didn't miss the way he glared at Jimmy as though he wasn't happy with Jimmy telling him all this. Had Grigg sworn them to secrecy? His heart fell to the pit of his stomach.

"The airport?" Nigel asked.

Jimmy nodded, "Flight is in a couple of hours. If you hurry you might just make it." Jimmy scrawled some details onto a piece of paper and thrust it into Nigel's hand, the concerned expression spurring him on.

*

Zeller watched as Nigel rushed out of the room, nearly pulling the door from its hinges. He cleared his throat before turning to Jimmy.

"So, what the fuck was that about?" He asked, tone cool but curious.

"Just... giving a nudge in the right direction," Jimmy answered, innocently. .

"A nudge towards the airport?" Zeller frowned, still not sure why Jimmy seemed to have sent Nigel after Grigg like that.

Jimmy wheeled on him then, a pointed finger raised to Zeller's chest. "Look, I've had enough of this coy bullshit. They are clearly in love with each other and I can't suffer another year or five of will they won't they, whilst neither of them muster the nerve to tell the other."

The words came out exasperated.

"Amen to that," Bev said from where she suddenly stood in the doorway. "Good work Price."

"Thank you Katz," Jimmy replied pleasantly as he walked towards her and the door back into the workshop, giving her a high five as he passed.

Zeller blinked, unable to refute the logic.

*

The fucking car was going to be the death of Nigel. Apparently one round trip to the airport the day before had been one too many. It conked out before he even got out of Grigg's gated community and had to order an uber. It was going to cost him a small fortune to get to the airport but Grigg was worth it. Even if they still needed a break, Nigel had to tell them how he felt first.

His heart plummeted at the thought. Maybe Grigg didn't want him to come running after them?

Nigel shook the thought. It didn't matter. He had to. He had to tell Grigg how he felt even if they did then reject him. But maybe they wouldn't, going on what Jimmy said. Maybe that's all he needed to say to stop Grigg from leaving. From leaving him. Or at the very least, ensuring he came back to him...

Was Grigg leaving him?

"Can't you go any fucking faster?" Nigel barked at the driver, who merely glared at him in the rearview mirror.

Nigel settled back, muttering curses under his breath as they raced towards the airport. He wasn't going to risk getting kicked out, though he was tempted to just hijack the car. The only thing stopping him was the idea of being grabbed by the cops when he just wanted to get to see Grigg. Wouldn't make it to the airport if he was in the back of a police car.

Way too long and an expensive fee later, Nigel jumped out at the drop off zone and now he just had to finding the right fucking flight. Jimmy had given him the time and destination, and even with the fair traffic, Nigel had a little over a half hour before the flight boarded.

Checking the boarding information on the screens once he got inside, confirmed that the flight was going to leave on time. Grigg was likely already in Departures and there was no way he was buying a ticket in time to get let through to that area.

"Fuck!" Nigel cursed, startling a small group that gave him a wide berth as they hurried by. "Fucking fuck!" He near shouted.

"Excuse me, sir. Can I help you?" The airport worker in front of him was a clear foot shorter than he was but had the sternest expression on her face.

"I… have an emergency." He said hurriedly, she narrowed her eyes and was none too subtle about taking a sniff of the air to see if he'd been drinking. He couldn't blame her.

"What kind of emergency?" She drawled, clearly unconvinced.

Nigel took a breath, looking around as though the answer would pop into his head. He couldn't exactly say his lover was leaving and he needed to stop them. This wasn't the movies, that wasn't going to get him a free pass here.

His gaze landed on some passengers seated by the information boards, one was an elderly man in a wheelchair.

“Um, my friend. His dad is.. Sick. He’s been rushed to the hospital and he’s um, he can’t walk. He can’t walk and he might… He needs Grigg there with him. I need to find Grigg.” Nigel tried to sound as legitimate as possible, and found himself coming up a little short.

The woman took a deep breath and narrowed her eyes on him even further.

“Look, please. Can you just… Can you make an announcement? For Grigg Harris. His flight is now through to Departures. I just need to give him some important information. If he could just come back out… Just for a minute...” Nigel stumbled over the words a little, his tongue tripping over the wrong pronouns and hating it. But he had no time for other people’s bullshit ideas on gender today.

She let out a heavy sigh and frowned at him, “Because his dad is in the hospital.” It wasn’t even a question as she saw completely through his lie.

“Please… No okay, I… I need to tell him. I’m not sure I’m good enough for him, whether I deserve him. And he might leave anyway, but I need to tell him I love him before-”

“Oh for heaven’s sake,” She cut him off and then turned heel to walk away. He was about to release a string of expletives, when she looked back at him and beckoned him to follow, which he did so at a pace.

*

Grigg sat in Departures, mentally checking through the hurriedly packed case of his own few items and all the materials for the convention. They were sure something had been forgotten, but it was too late now. If they didn’t have enough business cards they’d just have to make sure to take note of who wanted to know more.

They were already exhausted just thinking about the trip. A whirlwind visit to a busy business convention and then back home.

Home with Nigel.

Grigg soothed themself with the thought of coming home to Nigel and just curling up on the sofa and snuggling. Maybe getting a back rub… maybe more.

Grigg pulled out their phone and checked it for the hundredth time. Nigel still hadn’t responded to the text explaining what was happening. Nor the several others Grigg had sent since then.

It didn’t sit well with Grigg. Every time Nigel had been delayed in responding, something had been going on. Grigg’s mind went to when Nigel had been sick, and their stomach dropped. They should try and call him before boarding the flight.

The phone went straight to answerphone and Grigg was on the verge of leaving the airport to check on him. They’d just phone the office first, see if anyone had seen Nigel around the

building. And if not, whether someone could go check his office. Grigg's finger was about to press call, when the tannoy sounded.

"This is a call for US Airways flight to San Francisco, passenger Grigg Harris. Please come back through to check-in. That's Grigg Harris, please return to check-in."

Grigg's heart began to race and the blood drained from their face. Had something happened to Nigel.

It took a full minute before they were able to stand on shaky legs and start back to the check-in area. The whole time, their mind reeled with possibilities. An accident, or was he sick again?

Grigg couldn't lose Nigel, they just couldn't. Not after everything. They were so deeply in love with the man it would be like losing half their soul. They were holding back tears when they finally drew nearer to the desk and saw Nigel standing there.

He turned and looked at Grigg, clearly distraught at the pain Grigg was in. Nigel began to run, easily closing the space between them with long strides. When he was close enough, Grigg threw themself into his arms.

"Fuck, gorgeous. I'm sorry. I worried you didn't I? I'm so sorry. I just… I couldn't have you leave without telling you… and I… I don't want you to leave me, but if you feel like you have to, then please let me say this first-" The words came out so quickly, Grigg could barely keep up, finally interrupting with their reply.

"What are you talking about? I'm going to San Francisco." Grigg clarified.

"Fuck. Fuck…" Nigel muttered and held them tighter. "Please, I… Let me tell you then before you go. And if you ever come back I-"

"Nigel… What?" Grigg tried to pull back, confused by what Nigel was saying and concerned something really was wrong with him. But Nigel held them so tightly that there it took a minute of easing before they were able to pull away. Nigel's eyes were red with unshed tears and his lower lip was trembling.

"Oh god, what's happened?" Grigg asked, "Is it Gabi? Did something happen on the way to the airport?" Grigg tried to work out what else could have caused so much distress that Nigel was stopping him from getting his business flight.

"I just don't know if I deserve you. If I'm good enough for you. I've done some shit, and I'm just… You own your own successful business and I fix light bulbs." Nigel shook his head dismissively. "I don't want you to walk away if… I think I knew from almost the moment we met. When you were flat on your back in that fucking chair, I'd never seen anyone so fucking beautiful…" Nigel's voice broke a little and silent tears started to roll down his face.

Grigg reached out and smoothed one away with their thumb. "Nigel, please… You're perfect for me, never think anything different, okay?"

They spoke softly, realising that despite whatever was going on, or maybe because of it, they had no choice now. They had to say it and hope Nigel felt the same.

“I love you,” Grigg suddenly gushed the words.

Nigel’s breath stopped. They looked at each other for a long beat.

"I love you too, darling. Please don’t leave me.” Nigel’s words came out so softly, they stole Grigg’s breath.

“I love you,” Grigg repeated, enjoying the shape of the words on their tongue. Nigel pulled them back into an embrace, mouths finding each other, they kissed deeply as they clung to each other.

It was only when Grigg moaned into Nigel’s mouth that Nigel clearly realised the lack of propriety and pulled back.

They looked at each other dreamily, brimming with love.

And then Nigel’s words caught up with Grigg.

“Don’t leave you? Wait, what?”

Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

A blissfully happy ending.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One Year Later

"Fuck, yeah right there, darling. Fuck, Gigi..."

Nigel cried out as Gigi's fingers moved over his prostate, his eyes rolling as his cock throbbed in his hand and spurted onto the bed beneath him. He tried to stay on his hands and knees, but his whole body shook from the climax.

When Gigi finished all over his back, warm come hitting skin, Nigel groaned and fell forward on the bed.

He laughed when Gigi collapsed on top of him.

"Fucking filthy," Nigel grumbled with a chuckle.

He felt the shake of Gigi's laughter against him, where they pressed chest to back.

"We'll need another shower," Gigi noted, which drew another chuckle from Nigel.

Nigel started to get up, Gigi still clinging to him. He grunted with the effort, Gigi's arms around his neck, until they were both stood next to the bed.

"Better make it a quick one darling, I need to get over to my apartment. Landlord's biannual inspection tomorrow and I need to make sure the place is looking okay." Nigel reminded Gigi as the two of them parted and started towards the bathroom.

Nigel couldn't help but be delighted by the little sound of disappointment that escaped Gigi. Not just this time, but everytime that Nigel had to go home. Well, to his apartment, not really home.

Gigi's house had increasingly become home over the last year. He barely stayed at his apartment once or twice a week, sometimes not at all. Most of his clothes were at the house, and in truth, it felt like he was just paying rent as a storage fee at this point.

The obvious solution was staring them both in the face. But as with everything, Nigel wanted Gigi to lead, wanted them to be comfortable. There was no way he was going to broach the subject of moving in together first, Gigi had to do that when they were ready.

Nigel started the shower running as Gigi came up behind him and snaked arms around to his chest, pressing the mess between them once again.

“I’ll change the sheets when I get home,” Nigel said, rubbing his hands along Gigi’s arms.

Gigi hummed, “It’s okay, I’ll do it.”

Nigel wasn’t dumb to the fact that when he called the house *home*, Gigi had no problem with that. But there was a vast difference between calling somewhere home, and giving up his rental and moving all his shit in. Not least because then there was nowhere for him to go on those few nights when it felt like Gigi needed some space.

Nigel stepped into the shower and then pulled Gigi in with him. He was glad that his refractory period wasn’t as great as when he was younger, because otherwise the shower would likely have lasted a half hour. Maybe longer.

In the end, they settled for soaping each other and kissing whilst rinsing. It was the domestic bliss that Nigel had come to enjoy, staying at the house with Gigi. He was always going to be loathe to give that up. Every time he had to return to his apartment, whatever the reason for that might be.

“I’ll probably be in bed by the time you get home,” Gigi said as they towelled off their hair and started into the bedroom.

“I can just stay at the apartment if you like?” Nigel offered, trying to ignore the pang in his chest at the thought.

Gigi smiled and shook their head, damp curls bouncing around. “Of course not, besides it’s easier for us to get to work together from here. More eco friendly.”

“Very true, darling.” Nigel grinned, wrapping a towel around his waist and leaning in to nuzzle and sniff at Gigi’s freshly shampooed hair. “I’ll try not to wake you, you've got a big day tomorrow.”

Gigi laughed and ran their hands tantalisingly up Nigel’s chest, “Nigel, if you don’t wake me I’ll be very mad.”

Despite having come not more than twenty minutes earlier, Nigel’s cock gave a little twitch.

*

Jimmy closed his eyes as he popped the champagne cork, nearly taking out a ceiling panel as a result.

Everyone was laughing except Nigel, who eyed the panel and then Jimmy. Who, eyes now reopened, just gave a butter wouldn’t melt grin.

Gigi watched the whole interaction with no little amusement. Finally deciding to weigh in and hook their arm into Nigel's and pulled him close.

"Thanks for coming," Gigi whispered to Nigel.

"Where else would I go, gorgeous?" He winked and leaned in to give Gigi a peck on the cheek. At the last moment, Gigi moved so that their lips met in a soft press.

Nigel chuckled as he pulled back, a wicked look in his eyes.

"Oh please," Jimmy groaned at them. "When will this honeymoon period ever be over!" There was a mischievous sparkle in his eyes, that made Gigi smile.

"Did someone say honeymoon?" Bev piped up from across the room where she had been collecting the champagne flutes. "Are you getting married?!"

Gigi's heart did a little flip at the thought, and was glad that Nigel's reaction was to let out a soft, indulgent chuckle, rather than go running for the hills at the thought.

"Yeah," Jimmy weighed in again, gesturing towards them with the open bottle, a little sloshing onto the carpet. "When are you going to make an honest person out of them, hmm, Nigel?"

Before anything more could be said, Gigi held up their hands.

"Please, this is meant to be the relaunch party," Gigi indicated around the room to the small number of local business owners and clients that had been invited to join with the staff for the event. "No one wants to hear about our private lives."

Gigi shook their head when this was met with heartfelt laughter and a few cries of denial.

In the end, Jimmy saved Gigi from the situation he had created, by clinking a pen on his champagne flute and announcing, "Speech!"

"Oh, I…" Gigi started. They had planned on this being super informal, everyone in the room already knew the news, so they had no prepared speech. But when the cheers for a speech spread around the room, and Nigel stepped back so that Gigi had the floor alone, they realised there was no getting around it.

They cleared their throat and took the glass of champagne Bev handed them.

"I want to thank everyone for their support over the last eighteen months… well, longer really on a personal note. But in terms of business, you all know we were starting to meet barriers a little under two years ago-"

Jimmy muttered some quiet expletives that had everyone nodding along.

Grigg grinned and continued, "We had to change. Adapt to survive. So we did. I'm so proud to announce tonight the relaunch of my company. With a few new specialisms and a different business direction. It seemed fitting to give it a new name too."

As if on cue, Jimmy stepped aside so he was no longer obscuring the newly lettered signage on the office wall as Gigi gestured at it.

“To, *Gethen*,” Gigi said, raising their glass. This was met with cheers and clinking of glasses, and then applause.

Gigi looked over at Nigel, seeing the love and support in the man’s eyes. They had to wonder if Nigel knew just how much his encouragement meant. And just how much he meant to Gigi.

*

With the relaunch party over, the new business website, cards and various other literature all distributed, Gigi felt they deserved a well earned break.

Apparently so did everyone else. When they had suggested taking a long weekend, Zeller had practically pushed them out of the door.

Gigi smiled as they sank onto the sofa. Their face dropping as they ran their hands over it.

The sofa they had gone shopping for with Jocelyn. That life seemed so long ago now. In fact, massive parts of it felt like they belonged to someone else.

Gigi considered for a moment just throwing the sofa out. Having it collected for a charity or something, and going to buy another. But there was still one thing wrong with that, they realised. This wasn’t just about removing Jocelyn, it should also be about including Nigel.

Because as much as Gigi wanted a new sofa, they wanted all the more for Nigel to be part of that decision. For Nigel to want to make a home with them.

Gigi’s breath stilled at the realisation.

One that had clearly taken a stupidly long time to sink through, given that they had practically been living together for over a year.

Gigi looked around the living room. Other than their robots on the mantle, and a few things here and there, this had never really been their home either. It still felt much like a show home that they, both of them, just happened to live in.

They thought about Nigel’s little apartment and the things there. Sparse also, but the nicknacks all meant something. Small things he’d brought from Romania, gifts from Gigi.

If anything the most ‘them’ part of the house was the wardrobe in the spareroom that housed the multitude of Gigi’s costumes, both for cosplay and for the bedroom.

It was only a moment before their heard Nigel’s key in the door, that an idea struck Gigi.

When Nigel wandered through from the front of the house, clearly happily surprised to see Gigi home early, Gigi blurted out-

“I want to move.”

“Huh?” Nigel asked, brows knit together as he shrugged off his jacket and dropped down next to Gigi on the sofa.

For so many reasons, that action confirmed Gigi’s feelings on it all.

“And I hate this sofa.”

“Okay, well, what’s brought this on?” Nigel asked, clearly still very confused, but as supportive as ever.

“This house… I just, you know, bought it. Because my accountant said I should. I just pointed a finger and picked it out. And I don’t hate it, but it was never somewhere I was emotionally invested in. Not until you pretty much moved in.” Gigi smiled at Nigel, heart beating in their chest at the confession Nigel was sure to already know.

Nigel nodded, a gentle smile of his own before leaning in to nuzzle against Gigi’s neck. “I feel the same, about home I mean. You’re home to me. Wherever you are is home.”

Gigi let out a soft sigh and felt their heart swell.

“I’d like us to get some place together, I can sell this and we can find a house that is for both of us.” Gigi’s words were soft but brooked no argument.

Nigel drew back to look at them, wondering if they were completely serious.

“Well, that sounds great. But, it’s not that simple, gorgeous. I don’t have a lump sum to invest, so I’d still just be living in your house.” Nigel pointed out. “I’d need to pay you rent or something-”

“Yeah, sure.” Gigi answered quickly, everything coming together in their mind. In fact it was whirring so fast that the only thing keeping up with it was Gigi’s heart. “I can get my lawyer to draw something up. A prenup or something, if it makes you more comfortable. Once we’re married I guess everything is split anyway, right?”

Gigi trembled as they said the words. Completely unplanned. It wasn’t as though they had never thought about it, but they had never considered the practicalities of a proposal much less anything after that.

Nigel blinked.

“Darling, did you just ask me to marry you?”

“It would only be a marriage of convenience, you understand.” Gigi told him, a hint of a smile on the otherwise purposely flat expression, as they came back to themself, as though waking into a perfect dream. “I find it convenient having you around. For boyfriend things. Or, you know, husband things.”

“Fuck,” Nigel spat the word, eyes wide. “I want to make a joke about getting down my knees, but my brain isn’t working right now.”

Gigi let out a light laugh and moved closer, threading their hands up around Nigel’s neck, fingers toying with the back of his hair.

“I love you. I want us to live together and be married and live happily ever after.” Gigi grinned.

Nigel let out a chuckle and nuzzled into Gigi’s neck, “I think I can arrange that. I love you too, gorgeous.” He moved his mouth up to the underside of Gigi’s jaw, continuing to nuzzle as he travelled towards their mouth.

“Oh, and a dog.” Gigi said, just a moment before Nigel’s lips were going to take theirs - the thought popping into their brain. “We need to get a place with a nice garden so we can get a dog, I always wanted a dog.”

“You can have seven if you want them!” Nigel beamed, his heart full.

“That’s a bit excessive.” Gigi scalded, before leaning in to seal their mouths together.

*

“Gigi?” Nigel let himself into the house.

Still getting used to the place, or more so to the fact that it was truly home. For him and Gigi.

The acknowledgement still gave him a little thrill every time he crossed the threshold, despite them having moved in almost two months before.

“Upstairs,” Gigi called back.

Nigel couldn’t help the grin that spread across his face as he shrugged off his coat and hung it on the rack next to the door. Every time Gigi had been waiting for him upstairs, it had been quite the pleasure to join them.

And Nigel wasn’t going to be shy about expressing his pleasure, taking the stairs two at a time and hearing Gigi chuckle from the bedroom.

Nigel expected Gigi to be sprawled naked on the bed, as was often the case. So he came to a screeching halt when he got to the hallway and discovered Gigi standing seductively in the doorway.

They were wearing pink silk camisole top, with matching silk and lace panties that left nothing to the imagination. There was already a tiny damp patch where Gigi’s cock was already leaking against the fabric.

Nigel was so instantly hard it made him a little woozy.

“Fuck, angel… you look…”

“Gorgeous?” Gigi offered with a grin, turning to give an all round view of the outfit. It clung perfectly to their ass, so much so that Nigel’s mouth was watering.

“More than! What’s this from then darling? Is this a Princess Leia thing?” Nigel asked, still not entirely sure about a lot of the costumes Gigi wore to conventions, or in the bedroom. Sometimes both.

Gigi laughed and shook their head, “No, this isn’t from a film or anything. This is just for you. I saw it and thought-”

Nigel didn’t give them chance to finish their words, taking the last few steps between them in quick strides and lifting Gigi off the floor. Their legs went immediately around Nigel’s waist and they clung to each other as they devoured each other in a hungry kiss.

“Oh darling,” Nigel managed to groan against Gigi’s ear as he stumbled towards the bed with an armful of his partner. “So fucking gorgeous.”

He dropped Gigi to the bed, and they let out an amused laugh when they bounced a little. Looking up at him through half lidded eyes as they repositioned themself on the bed in a mind numbingly seductive pose.

Nigel let out a shuddering breath. It was getting to the point where he had to wonder if Gigi was just testing his health. Because one of these days they would send him into a coronary with their sexy shenanigans.

“All for me, huh?” Nigel growled as he eyed them up and down. Not hiding the salacious look and enjoying Gigi’s responding chuckle at it.

Nigel lowered himself over Gigi just right to be able to suck their left nipple through the soft, thin material. Gigi groaned and arched against him, making his cock throb.

“Fuck, I want all of it, darling.” Nigel groaned, still nuzzling at the silk.

“Uhuh,” Gigi nodded, already rock hard and wanting.

Nigel snaked a hand between them, rubbing hard over Gigi’s straining cock under yet more silk. This time lace added a little roughness and made Nigel hiss with anticipation.

“Fuuuuckk, you feel so good. So hard for me. You wanna fuck me, darling?” Nigel was breathless, moving his mouth to nuzzle against Gigi’s throat.

“Oh fuck,” Gigi’s voice was a high pitch, and the way they squeezed their eyes shut made clear to Nigel that they were barely stopping themselves from coming.

“Should I take that as a yes?” Nigel chuckled as he moved back off the bed. Gigi whined at the loss but watched him go with wide eyes, full of lust.

Nigel stripped quickly, before returning to the bed, laying on his stomach beside Gigi as he stretched to reach for the bedside drawer and the goodies within. When he pulled back with a

tube of lube, he noticed that Gigi was starting to pull their top up, as though planning to get naked.

“No,” Nigel responded quickly, “Leave it on, gorgeous. Want to feel the sensation of it rubbing against my skin as you fuck me.”

Gigi let out a whimper at that but nodded their head nonetheless.

*

Gigi groaned. Nigel felt so good around their cock. Always did, but there was something all the more thrilling when Nigel was so needy and wanting. So desperate that he had set himself up on all fours on the bed, ready for Gigi to use.

They had known how this would go as soon as they saw the look on Nigel’s face in the bedroom doorway.

“There, darling, oh fuck… Gigi,” Nigel growled out the words as Gigi hammered his prostate.

They were still wearing the cami, though it had ridden up to bare their midriff. And the knickers too, pulled down under their balls so that they could bury themself in Nigel over and over with no hindrance.

Gigi knew from the little moans that the lace trim of it was chaffing against Nigel’s balls.

“Are you gonna come, baby?” Gigi asked, setting a steady rhythm.

Nigel whimpered and nodded emphatically.

“Come for me Nigel,” Gigi commanded, breathlessly, before pressing themself all the way along Nigel’s back and leaning to his ear to whisper, “I love you.”

Nigel came with a cry, his whole body shuddering and clenching.

Gigi winced and pulled out of Nigel’s almost painfully constricting body, stroking twice before spilling all over Nigel’s back and hole.

Nigel collapsed into his own mess on the bed, panting and shaking.

“Fuck, you’re just… just so good at that, gorgeous.” Nigel huffed the words and a chuckle. “And fucking filthy too.”

Gigi collapsed next to Nigel on the bed, facing up at the ceiling and trying to catch their breath.

“Just trying to keep up with you,” Gigi laughed.

Nigel turned to face them and cocked a brow, “I will take credit for helping you become more sexually confident. The outfits are all down to you.”

Gigi let out a light laugh, their chest swelling at the thought of Nigel dressed up for them for a change.

“Maybe we need to go shopping for something for you.”

“Yeah?” Nigel sounded very interested in the idea as he shuffled closer and began nuzzling Gigi’s throat.

“Yeah… Remember I fucked you dressed as a cop once, quid pro quo.” Gigi grinned, shivering a little at the lightness of Nigel’s touch.

“You want me to dress as a cop, darling?” Nigel’s words were almost a groan. And Gigi couldn’t help but think that if Nigel would want to fuck again soon, once they could both get hard again.

“Not a cop, no. I picture you more as a ruffian, a pirate-”

“Pirate?” Nigel pulled back and looked at them with a curious frown, “Shiver me timbers?”

Gigi couldn’t help the chuckle. They nodded.

“Yeah, I guess kinda like that only… y’know, from space.”

Nigel grinned and went back to ministrations, “Aye captain.”

Gigi felt their cock twitch a little, valiantly trying to get hard again, and sure that Nigel was in the same boat. Perhaps another ten or twenty minutes of canoodling and they would both be-

Their soft means and mutterings were interrupted by a light scratching noise.

“Dammit!” Nigel growled, “It’s your turn.”

“It’s not,” Gigi countered, shaking with laughter, “but as you’re covered in come I’ll go.”

“This was your idea!” Nigel grumbled, a look of lament in his eyes as Gigi got up from the bed and pulled on a robe.

“But, in my defense, he was the cutest puppy I’d ever seen. Reminds me of his papa.” Gigi winked as Nigel grumbled good naturedly. Though that was almost drowned out by the sound of insistent whining at their bedroom door.

Gigi gave one last look back over their shoulder, a flirtatious wink as they opened the door. “Won’t be long, keep the bed warm for me. I’m not done with you yet.”

Nigel bit his lower lip and nodded, “Aye aye, Captain!”

Gigi picked Genly up from outside the door and started down the stairs, basking in the feeling of total completeness at being with Nigel in their own home with their own little family.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed this fic. It's been a lovely world to visit since I first had inspiration for the idea about a year ago, and it's been wonderful to have you all along with me :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!